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ABSTRACT

Written by teacher-participants during 3 summer institutes in literary criticism and the teaching of literature, the 11 resource guides presented in this book deal with literary texts by American authors--texts which are commonly taught in secondary English classrooms. Each resource guide in the book includes critical commentary and information regarding the text's potential for teaching; a pool of instructional objectives; options for beginning study of the text; options for dealing with the text after students have read it; suggestions for evaluating students' success with the text and with selected activities; an annotated list of related texts; and at least one camera-ready guide for reading aimed at enhancement of a designated concept, insight, or literary/reading skill or strategy. The book begins with "An Overview of Critical Approaches (Alex Dunlop and Drew Clark); and "Critical Theory in the Classroom" (Douglas Alley). Resource guides in the book are "'Silent Snow, Secret Snow' by Conrad Aiken" (Sandra P. Harper); "'The Awakening' by Kate Chopin" (MaDonna K. Leenay); "'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass' by Frederick Douglass" (Patricia D. Franks); "'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald" (Jim Fletcher); "'The Scarlet Letter' by Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Phyllis F. Cherubini); "'Their Eyes Were Watching God' by Zora Neale Hurston" (W. David LeNoir); "'A White Heron' by Sarah Orne Jewett" (Janice M. Knipp); "'The Jilting of Granny Weatherall' by Katherine Anne Porter" (Mary Stamler); "'Of Mice and Men' by John Steinbeck" (Betty Esslinger and Ann Sharp); "'A Worn Path' by Eudora Welty" (Ronda Ramsey Foster); and "'Ethan Frome' by Edith Wharton" (Adela Aragon Candelaria). Appended is a 19-item annotated teacher's reading list for educators who wish to examine further the theories and pedagogy associated with the critical approaches used by the authors of the guides in the source book. (RS)

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Literary Criticism and the Teaching of Literature

A Teacher's Sourcebook

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Foreword

The resource guides which appear in this volume were written by teacher-participants during three summer institutes in literary criticism and the teaching of literature, five-week institutes conducted on the campus of Auburn University in 1985, 1987, and 1988. Funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the university, the institutes were designed to provide opportunities for secondary school English teachers to expand their knowledge of literary criticism and their abilities to apply that knowledge to instructional planning based upon sound teaching principles. One hundred twenty-four teachers from 31 states and Guam participated in the institutes.

Although more than half of the participants had earned master's degrees in either English or English Education, few had had any formal instruction in literary criticism. Their early responses to literature--the language that they used during discussions or in their journal entries, the questions that they asked--reflected the strong influence of New Criticism on their preparation as English teachers. Throughout the institutes, participants devoted half of their time to attending lectures and participating in discussions related to selected critical approaches and assigned literary texts, all of which are frequently taught in secondary schools. Eminent scholars of literary criticism who served as guest lecturers during this portion of the institutes included Robert Denham, Judith Fetterley, Marjorie Garber, W. J. T. Mitchell, Mary Poovey, Robert Probst, Peter Rabinowitz, and Louise Rosenblatt.

During the other half of each institute, participants considered reading theory and its applications to the teaching of literature, developed teaching strategies for literary texts that they had studied together, and developed 85 resource guides, all of which appear in the sourcebooks published by the university following each institute.

Participants were permitted to choose the literary texts for which they developed resource guides so long as the texts were frequently taught in secondary schools. Some chose to develop materials for texts considered during an institute, but most chose others with which they were familiar. They were also given the opportunity to organize development teams if they wished.

Individuals or teams were asked to develop resource guides containing the following information for themselves and prospective readers:

- An overview which includes a critical commentary and information regarding the text's potential for teaching
- A pool of instructional objectives from which teachers might select those which are appropriate for their classes
- Options for beginning study of the text, including activities which build background (including concepts and vocabulary), provide a preview, and establish purposes for reading

- Options for dealing with the text after students have read it, including discussion and activities requiring oral and written communication
- Suggestions for evaluating students' success with the text and with selected activities
- An annotated list of related texts
- At least one camera-ready guide for reading aimed at enhancement of a designated concept, insight, or literary/reading skill or strategy.

The eleven resource guides selected for this volume are for literary texts by American authors--an arbitrary decision made by an editor blessed with too much fine material to publish in one volume. Some of the texts are classics, some are modern; some are short stories, some are novels, and one is an autobiographical narrative; some were written by men, some by women; and some were written by minority authors. Teacher-authors selected critical approaches that they thought were appropriate for interpreting their respective texts. All of the critical approaches which the institutes emphasized are prominent in the critical commentaries, instructional objectives, and activities for at least three of the resource guides: New Criticism, neo-Aristotelian, archetypal, psychoanalytic (or psychological), reader response, and feminist. The guides are intended as resources, not lesson plans; indeed, teachers will need to be selective and creative in their use of the guides, for they contain a great deal more than teachers will have time to use.

Several institute staff members have shared with me the responsibility for preparing this publication. Three outstanding Alabama English teachers--Cliff Browning, Sara McAnulty, and Loyd Mehaffey--served the institutes as mentor-teachers. In addition to their teaching duties, they advised participants while they were developing their resource guides and, later, evaluated the guides and helped to prepare them for institute publications. Douglas Alley, a professor of English Education at Auburn University and director of the institutes, helped to edit all three institute publications. Finally, I am greatly indebted to David LeNoir, an institute participant in 1985 and currently an instructor in English Education at Auburn. His skilled and critical reading, his attention to detail, his sound advice, and his industry have contributed a great deal to this professional enterprise.

Terry C. Ley
Auburn University
June 1993

An Overview of Critical Approaches

Alex Dunlop

Drew Clark

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At Auburn's three NEH Institutes for the study of literary criticism, high school teachers examined a number of critical theories and concepts, among them New Criticism, Aristotelian criticism, reader response criticism, Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, and archetypal criticism, feminism, structuralism, deconstruction and new historicism. Emphases shifted from Institute to Institute in accord with the interests of the guest speakers, the professors, and the teachers. The analyses contained in this volume represent many of those interests. The iteration of labels of the various theories and concepts may suggest the possibility of mixing bits of this and that to make an approach to our particular taste. However, approaches to literature reflect approaches to life, and each of the approaches we have identified represents a set of beliefs concerning the nature of language and its functions in our lives. Each has its own contexts: a history, social and political implications, and relationships with other approaches to literature. Our intention in this introduction is to note briefly some of those contexts.

Literary criticism in America from 1930 to 1970 was concerned preeminently with form. Of the formalistic movements, none has been more influential than New Criticism, of which the professed program was simply the careful reading of the literary text as an integral unit. That it is hard to imagine what can have been so new about such a program indicates the extent to which New Criticism has revolutionized critical practice. In fact, the idea of newness was essential to New Criticism, which, in reaction against a nineteenth-century historicism emphasizing the biographies of authors and a subjective aestheticism based on the intuitive judgment of educated readers, defined itself in large part by what it was not.

First and foremost, it was not the study of authors. Though conceding that books may tell us a great deal about their authors, New Critics sharply distinguished the value of such information from the moral, intellectual, or emotional value of the work itself. This specifically literary value is expressed in the words that make up the text and that, once published, exist independent of the wishes or of the subsequently expressed opinions of the author. The New Critics labelled any failure to recognize the independence of the text from its author the "intentional fallacy." Similarly, New Criticism was not the study of readers. The reader, New Critics insisted, is no more a part of the text than natural scientists are part of the materials they study. New Critics felt that meaning must reside in the text, for without a text independent of the subjective biases of the reader, criticism would become groundless subjectivity, a threat that seemed increasingly unattractive during the years when criticism was establishing itself ever more firmly as a discipline in universities dominated, like the time generally, by the glamor and power of natural science and technology. To accord undue attention to the variable responses of readers came to be called the "affective fallacy." In the same way, though literature may be political, religious, philosophical, psychological, or sociological, New Criticism was not the study of any of those disciplines. The assumption that there is something specifically literary about some uses of language served to set literature apart and to focus critical attention of the work's literariness (a term developed by the Russian Formalists early in the twentieth century) or on what New Critics often called poetry *as* poetry (and not some other thing). Approaches to literature from the perspective of any other discipline were labelled "extrinsic."

The New Critics, to whom the ontological independence of the text seemed self-evident, did not theorize much about literariness. Their business was to produce readings, to put the text under the literary microscope in a process of analysis called "close reading" in order to determine precisely what its parts are and how they relate to the whole. Characteristically, the New Critics understood this whole as a pattern of words, images, and symbols reconciling or balancing tensions and paradoxes in an organic unity of meaning. This principle provided also the basis for evaluation, which was fundamental to their enterprise; the greater and more vexing the complexity incorporated into its organic unity, the greater the work. Hence followed the poetic practice of T. S. Eliot, whose creative and critical writings were essential New Critical documents, and the admiration of the New Critics for the English metaphysical poets.

By mid-century New Criticism had the field largely to itself. But not entirely. A small but vocal group of scholars at the University of Chicago emphasized the old rather than the new as they championed Aristotelian principles and methods for the interpretation of literature. Because of Aristotle's emphasis on the preliminary identification of species in order to recognize the qualities peculiar to each, the neo-Aristotelian literary critic ascribed more importance than the New Critic to literary genres or types. Another difference between these critical groups was the neo-Aristotelians' "pluralistic" willingness to admit social or political aspects of a work as part, albeit a secondary part, of its overall aesthetic effect. Most important, the two groups differed in what they emphasized as the basic stuff and the immediate purpose of literature. Where the New Critic saw primarily words and images arranged to produce a meaning, the neo-Aristotelian saw primarily an imitation of human action and experience arranged to produce an emotional effect.

Today the differences of these mid-century schools of criticism seem less important than their similarities. The most lasting contributions of both New Critics and neo-Aristotelians may be, first, their insistence on attention to the concrete, the particular, and the specific, and, second, their emphasis on methodological consistency and self-awareness. The most problematic characteristic of both groups, however, was their preoccupation with the coherence of the literary text. Virtually all subsequent critical theory has challenged or redefined the notion of the text as an independent whole.

One such redefinition involved the recognition that the literary work comes fully into being neither when it is conceived nor when it is printed, but only when it is read. To understand literature, then, we must study the reader and the process of reading. Drawing on European antecedents, reader response criticism became influential in America in the decade of the seventies. Reader response critics differ in locating the occurrence of the work closer to the text or closer to the reader. For Wolfgang Iser the process in dialectical: the reader "actualizes" the potential of the text, but the text at the same time "occupies" and "supplants" the thoughts of the reader. On the other hand, Stanley Fish emphasizes the role of the reader: "interpreters do not decode poems: they make them" (327). Such a principle undermines formalist assumptions of literariness, for if the reader makes the poem, anything can be a poem, even, as Fish argues, a simple list. To avoid radical subjectivity, Fish reaches not back towards the text, as had the New Critics, but outward to society: we distinguish acceptable readings from idiosyncratic ones by "the authority of interpretive communities." In practice reader response criticism focuses with varying degrees of closeness on the experience of the reader reading--on patterns of anticipation and retrospection, on assumptions and conditions. The legacy of the flourishing of reader response theory in the seventies has been far-reaching and multi-faceted: a number of active scholars who identify themselves as reader response critics, a broad interest in subsequent theory and criticism in the role of the reader, and a modification of pedagogical practice at all levels.

Other approaches of the last thirty years have continued the centrifugal movement away from the independent, integral text as the central object of critical attention. These approaches vary widely and have proliferated rapidly. They include linguistically-based structuralism and its inheritors, psychoanalytic and archetypal criticism, and various forms of historical and political analysis, notably including feminism. Rejecting the idea of literature-as-literature as a disabling tautology, these scholars and teachers have variously investigated how reading and writing work in, among, and upon our languages, our psyches, and our social groups. To them, literary texts record and often occasion significant and signifying behavior. Literature, in other words, does not insulate writers and readers from the conflicting currents of their historical moment, their culture, their families, or their own minds. It rather may reveal, under analysis, the meaning of behavior, especially of that sort of behaving we do with texts.

Two of these approaches are related: psychoanalytic criticism and its sometimes prodigal offspring, archetypal criticism. The first approach derives, of course, from the theories and writings of Sigmund Freud, though now most psychoanalytic criticism has been much influenced by post-Freudian writers such as the French analyst Jacques Lacan. The archetypal approach derives from the ideas of Freud's one-time associate, Carl Jung, who quarrelled famously with his teacher over some issues. In these two approaches understanding literature is a special case of understanding psychology. Like our myths and dreams (and like our symptoms, slips of the tongue, and free associations), literature represents strategies for dealing with common recurrent psychological problems. Also like other, non-literary strategies, literature often represents these problems and strategies in cryptic form, requiring decoding. Because psychoanalytic and archetypal critics hold that literature symbolically represents responses to unconscious problems, the whole dynamic remains veiled until analysis uncovers its secret operations. Moreover, both psychoanalytic and archetypal studies often attempt to show how psychological mechanisms shape the behavior not only of literary characters but also of writers and readers.

To psychological critics the differences between the psychoanalytic and archetypal approaches are likely to matter more than their similarities. Briefly, we might suggest, the Jungian paradigm is heroic, the Freudian ironic. Jungians tend to emphasize how the hero's psyche takes form, by a process Jung called "individuation"; even within heroic legends, on the other hand, Freudians find cross-cutting desires and defenses that, both inside and outside of texts, deform human beings even as they are formed. Usually, the Jungian approach has at hand more devices and symbols, seen as primitive elements of psychic structure stored in the "collective unconscious": the *animus* and *anima*, shadow-selves, wise old men, great mothers, and Peter Pans, not to mention the alchemical charts, mandalas, and flying saucers with which Jung was also much concerned. Freudian analysis of texts is no less rich, but it usually works with fewer symbols. Freud, too, was an archetypal thinker, but he reverted constantly to a few situations and conflicts: the Oedipus complex, for example--its formation, its repression, its reassertion in the formation of symptoms, and its undoing in sublimation or the so-called transference. Today Freud's authority seems much better established among literary critics than Jung's. As long as we perceive that stories, poems, plays, and movies are about what we have called our minds, souls, spirits, or selves, psychoanalytic and archetypal criticism will remain attractive to many.

Another approach to literature sometimes linked with Jungian archetypalism is represented in the writing of the Canadian theorist Northrop Frye, especially his famous *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Like the New Critics and the neo-Aristotelians, Frye treats literature as an autonomous realm. He differs from these formalist critics, however, in proposing that all of literature--the order of words—can be treated as a body of unified phenomena, a "world" whose workings can be studied and explained almost scientifically by literary criticism, just as the workings of the material world are treated by the natural sciences. Because of this assumption, Frye rejects evaluation as a part of literary study. The object of studying literature is not to show why some works are better than others (a common feature of New Criticism) but to understand, dispassionately, how the literary system functions. Influenced by studies of comparative religion, Frye has proposed a structure of literary "mythology," according to which all individual works can be understood as retellings, in various modes, of the seasonal pattern of growth, fructification, decay, and renewal.

Two very important movements in literary criticism since 1960, structuralism and deconstruction, are not represented in these teaching guides but should be mentioned here. Their absence from these exemplary pedagogies results partly from the nature of their governing assumptions. Structuralism—a broad movement across many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences—was an attempt to uncover the basic rules and permutations of sign systems, whether those appear in fairy tales, in grammar, or in kinship terms. The French critic Roland Barthes produced basically structuralist studies of wrestling, striptease, and fashion. In literary study, structuralism usually aims not to interpret single works but to examine and clarify the rules of reading within a given community that make intelligible interpretations possible to begin with. Deconstruction, which is sometimes linked with other approaches of the 1970's and 1980's under the general heading "post-structuralism," grows out of certain ideas in structuralist linguistics and skeptical epistemology. It is genuinely post-structuralist, because deconstructionists consider intelligibility itself as a problem, not a given, of reading. Deconstructive activity has produced a wide range of interesting work, from critical accounts of Western metaphysics like Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* to brief, skeptical "readings" of Donne's "The Canonization" or Melville's *Billy Budd*, readings which seem uncannily like New Criticism stood on its head.

Another set of approaches to literature, strongly represented in work done since 1960, begins from analysis of social groups or classes rather than of individual psyches. These approaches include Marxist and feminist ways of talking about literature. Both of these critical movements are explicitly devoted to bringing about certain social changes. Both usually claim, also, that so-called non-political approaches to literary study have a concealed politics, usually a conservative one. The social approach itself includes less obviously politicized movements—for example, various forms of reader response theory and what is today called cultural studies, including the new historicism and the study of literary institutions. Despite their many differences, most of these approaches derive their basic assumptions about literature from theories of history. Along with the insistence on the importance of historical context there often comes a commitment to particular values, whether traditional or innovative, and to programs of action, whether conservative or revisionary. Suspicious of universalizing claims about "human nature," "archetypes," or, for that matter, "literature," critics and teachers using this approach argue that the texts we call literature cannot reasonably be separated from the material and social conditions in which they were first produced or in which they are read and discussed today. More than that, such people argue that those who write and read and study literary texts use them to affect relations of power that help to form those conditions.

Certainly one of the most vital of these social approaches to reading and writing is feminist literary criticism. Feminist critics and teachers have undertaken two basic tasks: to resist the dominant, male-centered literary system and to discover alternatives to it. Already the work at the second of these tasks has produced impressive results. Many "lost" books written by women have been found, edited, and published in inexpensive editions. The standard college anthologies of literature now include more works by women than they once did, and whole anthologies of women's writing are now being marketed. In short, the old canon of received texts has been substantially reshaped. But feminist critics have also altered our understanding of texts we once thought we knew, just as feminism more generally has altered who gets access to education and hence to "understanding texts" to start with. Feminist critics have asked unsettling questions about many traditionally valued texts. What does *The Taming of the Shrew* or *For Whom the Bell Tolls* have to say about women? When schoolgirls read books about men and boys, especially books that represent misogyny in one form or another (say, *Rip Van Winkle* or *Huckleberry Finn*), what happens, especially if they are taught that these books also represent "the" American experience? Just as the bibliographic work of feminist criticism has unearthed buried texts by women, so its interpretive work has made possible new responses to familiar texts by men and women alike.

There have been many areas of disagreement among feminists. For example, do women's text constitute a different order of writing altogether, what some French feminists call *écriture féminine*? Or is it simply that some women have written texts that, although they have been unjustly neglected, do not upset previous canons of taste? Is gender a privileged category for understanding reading and writing? What about other markers that may affect how a woman reads and is read—her race, her class, her general education, her religious creed? In its first phase, feminist criticism privileged the concept of gender. Now, generally speaking, other questions have gained new urgency, enabled largely by the accomplishments of first-stage feminist study. This diversity of accents within feminist criticism reflects the whole spectrum of contemporary ways of reading literature. It has become a necessary and exciting fact of most critical experience today, both in the university and in the high school.

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Critical Theory in the Classroom

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The reading of literature is an autonomous activity between the reader and the text. Readers bring to bear upon their reading their total schema, their knowledge, attitudes, ideas, and even their morality. Yet, as every teacher knows, a student can "read" every word of a text from start to finish and have little or nothing of importance to say about the experience. Hence, the true nature of literature requires the teacher to bring the experience of literature from this private reading perspective to a communal discussion of ideas, responses, questions, and even disagreements. Literature then becomes a shared experience, an active enterprise that allows students to view literature as a complex reflection of life, while at the same time allowing students to question their own motives, opinions, impressions, and concepts of what literature really is.

Teachers of literature naturally approach a work of literature in many ways. However, the dialectic of the classroom, regardless of its form, is strongly structured by the way teachers themselves extract meaning from the short story, poem, novel, or drama being considered. Ms. Green, for example, is an eleventh grade teacher of literature who believes that only the text is important, that if it is a good work of literature, all that is necessary for a "correct" analysis or interpretation is the language of the work itself. The author's life, his intentions, and his effect should have little or no bearing on the reader's understanding of the work. The language, the ambiguities, and the nuances are the important elements to be considered. She believes that form and meaning are inseparable, and she tries desperately to have her students realize that an adequate analysis of the work must come from an understanding of how the author has manipulated the language.

Mr. Brown also teaches eleventh grade literature. He agrees that the language is important but not the most important element. He also agrees that form and meaning must merge in the reader's mind, but he believes that form in the sense of the action or the plot is the controlling element. He wants his students to see that literature is a true reflection of life—a good imitation, as Aristotle would say.

Ms. Smith is a beginning teacher of literature and has been influenced by Rosenblatt's transactional theory. Her concern is to get her students to respond to whatever work of literature she is sharing with the class. Students may be free-wheeling in their responses, as long as they are responding. She is aware of problems students have in interpreting literature, but her primary concern is with what the literature *does*, rather than what is *means*. And while some of their responses may be inappropriate or idiosyncratic in terms of an adequate analysis, she is happy when her students respond to literature. She does try to keep the students' attention on the text, but her primary aim is to get her students involved with the literature and to have the work affect them.

Mr. Roe looks at literature from yet another angle. His concern is the recurring patterns of life that literature paints. He is especially interested in having his students understand that literature reflects life and the rites of passage that individuals and groups encounter in their lives. Because he teaches high school literature, he tries to select poems, short stories, and novels that point up the ceremonial encounters that young people face. He is especially interested in the movement of young people from childhood to adulthood. He realizes, as one of his professors stated, that innocence must die before one can become an adult. He remembers that "everyone must have a rendezvous with evil" and that only from this rendezvous can an individual escape the innocence of childhood.

Ms. Taylor believes the study of literature must involve the fundamental ambiguities of the feminine experience. She seeks to lead her students to an understanding of how women (and girls) are portrayed, especially in the historical context of women's oppression. Her approaches range from psychoanalytic to archetypal, from close textual analysis to free response, from a neo-Aristotelian view of the work as imitation to a radical deconstruction of the text itself.

While these descriptions of teachers' stances are overly simplified, they do point up the fact that teaching practices and critical theories are always implicated in one another. The approach to a work of literature, the emphases the teacher places on certain aspects of the work, and the questions the teacher asks about the work are all derived (either knowingly or unknowingly) from a theory or theories of critical analysis. It is critical theory that allows teachers to justify what takes place in the classroom and also provides them with a system of evaluating the stance they have taken on a particular work of literature. This self-scrutiny allows the teachers to be self-conscious about a particular approach and to consider students' resistance to a specific interpretation as a valid reason for reevaluation.

Although it is quite possible to teach literature from a single critical perspective, teachers must be aware of the assumptions they are making about the literature and realize that these assumptions might be questioned if the literature is examined from another perspective. Each critical approach has its own bases for interpretation, its own power, and its own limitations. And, all the approaches offer ways of looking at literature as a kind of truth more deeply and significantly human than the truths of history or science. Whatever the approach, the objective remains the same: to bring to bear upon the literary selection those elements that will enhance the students' understanding and appreciation, not only of the work under discussion but of literature the students will read later in their lives.

Theoretical and pedagogical practices are intertwined. The questions critics ask about a work of literature can help the teachers understand and demonstrate in their classrooms the complexity of both theory and pedagogy. The discerning teacher's literature class will become not a history of literary activities but a course in interpretation, a series of experiences which lead students to see the many "hows" of deriving meaning from the text. Dogmatism will have no place in this classroom. Instead, the experience of literature will be an exploration of conscious responses, of questioning postures, and of open-minded, receptive attitudes.

During this century, critical theory has undergone dramatic change. No doubt it will continue to evolve, perhaps surpassing the current radical deconstructive stance. Given the changing nature of critical theory, critical consensus is probably impossible to achieve, and no one should expect or even want such a "solution." The conflicts and confrontations within critical theory should also be a phenomenon of the literature classroom. Both students and teachers become explorers in terms of their knowledge of life, their particular critical sensibilities, and the literary work before them. The teacher becomes a facilitator, leading the exploration, realizing that one's view of literature and the meaning derived from it are conditioned by the reader's needs, the life experiences of the reader, his or her special interests, and the intellect brought to bear on the work in question. Nothing is predominant and nothing omnivorous in this critically charged classroom. The only certainty is the uncertainty of coping with an author's view of life and humanity.

The problematics of interpretation should then become the focus of the secondary school literature classroom. Students should be given the opportunity to test their interpretive skills, to wrestle with their own ideas and inclinations. Structuralism and deconstruction aside, students need to know that textual meaning can be decidable, that this meaning is not something only experts can decipher, and that there are parameters within which this meaning must fit. Ultimately, the objective of the reader is to achieve an understanding of an author's work. In classrooms, students and teachers should work together to critique the literature in terms of its meanings and its themes. A mutual critical dialectic is what is necessary if the students are to become *readers of literature* rather than merely observers of the limited number of selections covered in a given classroom. The overall objective of all teachers of literature should be to equip the students with the means of coping with the texts they will encounter throughout their lives as readers.

"Silent Snow, Secret Snow"

Conrad Aiken

Sandra P. Harper

Prescott High School

Prescott, Arizona

Overview

Critical Commentary. Literature teachers enjoy literature and are committed to allowing opportunities and providing skills for their students' love of literature to develop further—goals inherent in the teaching of literature. Because critical reading, not only of literature but of all forms of discourse, is necessary in a society dependent in many ways upon the printed word, developing critical reading skills in students is also an important goal in the teaching of literature. Understanding and implementing appropriate critical literary approaches can facilitate the accomplishment of these goals.

In regard to the different critical approaches which might be used to teach any literary work and the choices that teachers must make in planning their instruction, a statement from Douglas Alley is especially pertinent:

> What the teacher of literature should understand is that there is no bounded, completely isolated, theory of criticism. Teachers cannot enclose themselves in one small room of the Castle of Criticism. The poem or other literary work is a creation of a

> writer's imagination, and this imagination is not imprisoned but roams far and wide into the past, present, and future, into the dark shadows of the unconscious, into the dimly lighted caverns of shadowed generations, into that rolling and ponderous mass of thought that has lived before him. (6)

Thus, the idea of a pluralistic approach to teaching any literary work asserts itself. In light of this assertion, the short story "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" lends itself well to an examination through the perspectives of five critical approaches: psychological, New Critical, neo-Aristotelian, archetypal, and reader response. Teachers should be aware of the abundant possibilities of the story and make choices relevant for their particular groups of students as well as for the purposes of the study. Following is a summary of how these five approaches can be utilized in a study of this short story.

Psychological Approach. "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" is an account of an adolescent's gradual deterioration into psychosis, narrated in third person but from the protagonist's point of view. The account is an inside view of a mind gradually losing contact with reality. Conrad Aiken juxtaposes a realistic, almost case-history-perfect clinical perspective with the poet's use of imagery and language, emphasizing both the symbolic and the actual "descent into madness" in one chilling and provocative telling.

Although most adolescents are not prepared for a sophisticated study of Freudian psychology or psychoanalytic criticism, they do have a natural interest in psychology and are familiar with some mental disorders and the attendant psychoanalytical terms. Also, as there are many classic, generally anthologized literary works of this nature, a look at this story with an eye to its psychological aspects can be fruitful and interesting to high school students, who are involved in their own developing identities.

As part of a psychological view of "Snow," students should be made aware of the concept of the unconscious as it is explained by Freud as well as of the clinical symptoms of schizophrenia, since the protagonist's characteristics and actions parallel those of one who suffers from this personality disorder. This knowledge will help the students to see the symbolic and literal regression of the protagonist into psychosis and thus will facilitate a much richer understanding of the work. This information can be given in several different ways: on handouts, in prereading activities, by lecture, by group inquiry, or by a combination of these strategies.

New Critical Approach. Rich in symbolic language and imagery and redolent with poetic technique, "Snow" also lends itself to enhancement by a close textual reading in a New Critical approach to instruction. The poet in Conrad Aiken influences his prose style, and indeed the story reads like a poem. An understanding and appreciation of the multiple uses of images of snow is crucial to a complete and full explication of the work. Word connotation study would be particularly helpful in illustrating how the author has chosen words carefully to create clear images in the mind of the reader.

The language used in each of the four sections of the story is indicative of the stages Paul goes through in his retrogression: detachment, alienation, isolation, and finally, psychological death. A close study of the imagery makes possible an understanding of the process of deterioration on a symbolic level and helps the students to more fully appreciate how and why an author uses imagery.

Ambiguities, tension, irony, and paradox—in action and in words—abound in the double life of Paul Haselman. Paul lives concurrently in two worlds: a dreary, mundane, arid real world and a beautiful, enchanting illusory world of snow, a world which seduces him and holds him entranced as he steadfastly and singlemindedly pursues his own psychological death in ". . . peace, . . . cold . . . sleep." Both of these worlds are brought to life for the reader through skillful use of language.

Neo-Aristotelian Approach. In any study of a narrative literary work, particularly prose, a teacher naturally emphasizes some aspects of a neo-Aristotelian approach to instruction, since one rarely teaches prose fiction without some attention to plot structure, unity, characters in action, point of view, and total effect. And though we study the parts, the artistic whole is that with which we are most concerned.

The total effect of this story is fascinated horror as the reader is witness to Paul's transition into insanity, into a world in which the universal conflict between appearance and reality is fused. This horror is contrasted with the total peace, harmony, and beauty conveyed to the reader and experienced by Paul as he relinquishes himself to the smothering "snow."

The structuring of the plot into four sections, each of which represents a stage in the progression of insanity, provides for a natural neo-Aristotelian study of the action in the story. The character of Paul is one with which most adolescent readers will relate and for which they will feel pity and fear. In addition, Aiken's careful choice of language, each image designed to create and build to the final total effect, is an example of a masterful creation of neo-Aristotelian unity. In this story, plot, character, language—all of the parts—work together to create an organic whole.

Archetypal Approach. Regarding archetypes, Alan Richardson said, "When a reader responds to literature, he is responding to the archetypes in the collective unconscious." The "collective unconscious" is a term explained by Carl Jung as that part of the ritual experiences of primitive persons, founded in cultural mythology and handed down from generation to generation in each person's psyche. The collective unconscious consists of the sum of human instincts and their correlates, the archetypes. These archetypes represent some primitive data of the unformed mind of the total past of humankind. One prominent archetype, the initiation archetype, is frequently found in adolescent literature.

In order to reach adulthood, adolescents must go through the process of development with its trials and failures, finally to become integrated into mature society. Adolescents can relate to the alienation and isolation of Paul Haselman (in "Snow"), who is on the threshold of the transition but who seems driven to a reversion of the integration. "Snow" is not a typical story in the archetypal mode, but there is correlation when the story is viewed as an initiation with the protagonist in a psychologically unhealthy, arrested development. Indeed, the stages of Paul's regression in the story, actually set apart and numbered with Roman numerals by Aiken, are representative of the physical distance Paul is from his final succumbing to total isolation. In the beginning of the story, Paul is in his school room; in the next stage, he is walking home from school; then he is at home, where he eventually goes to his bed; and finally, he retreats into himself. When Paul succumbs to his fantasy world's seduction, his growth toward maturation and integration into society is reversed, and he is frozen in the separation stage of initiation.

This story could be well employed after an introduction of the initiation theme and after one story of this genre has been read and discussed. Paul does go on a journey toward self-recognition, but the journey is a journey backward. As Aiken says, ". . . it comes inward instead of opening like a flower—it is a flower becoming a seed—a little cold seed."

The archetypal significance of the color imagery in the story, especially white with its direct oppositional meaning in myth (light, purity, innocence, timelessness/death, terror, the supernatural), fits comfortably into this critical approach. In addition, the idea of Jung's "shadow" self is suggested by Paul's double life in the story.

Furthermore, the cycle of the seasons and the implications inherent in the winter in which Paul desires to bury himself are relevant to the teaching of "Snow." According to Northrop Frye, the fourth phase in the archetypal cycle is the darkness, winter, and dissolution phase—archetypes of floods and the defeat of the hero. The oblivion of the snow and Paul's descent into complete isolation, the images of snow and its total "flooding" of reality, and Paul's dissolution into mental illness—all of these correspond to the fourth phase in the archetypal cycle.

A final word about archetypal implications of this work: In a tragic work, the hero often becomes isolated and is subsequently overthrown. In an urban setting, there may be images of a modern desert with garbage, ruins, or sinister geometrical images and shapes. In the winter seasonal archetype, the time is night (the equivalent of death), and the predominant colors are black, grey, and white. The urban setting includes cold concrete and bare trees, with nothing growing. Images such as these are rife in the second section of Paul's journey away from integration. For instance, on his way home from school Paul notices ". . . branches. . . black and desiccated. Dirty sparrows. . . dull in color as dead fruit left in leafless trees . . . a scrap of torn and dirty newspaper, caught in a little delta of filth." Images such as these, and many more besides, provide the substance to warrant an archetypal approach to instruction.

Reader Response Approach. "Snow" is readily adaptable to a reader response approach, especially at the freshman or sophomore level. These students are not usually accustomed to being asked what they think about a piece of literature, and many times they are reluctant to risk venturing an opinion. The use of response journals which are not graded in a traditional manner allows students to respond freely to literature and to develop their own voices. This particular short story is a provocative one for adolescents who, at this stage in their lives, should have no problem relating and responding to the protagonist's pain. With the teacher's guidance, students sharing their responses in small and large peer groups can create a dynamic community of learners not possible in a traditional situation in which the teacher is the chief interpreter.

A study of a story such as "Snow" can encourage students to explore and share their own feelings of alienation and isolation that sometimes border on the frightening, if not the neurotic. Given a voice about literature, the means to express it, and the knowledge that what they think has value, students are more likely to become "active" readers. "Active" readers experience ownership of their reading and of their learning, an ownership which, when nurtured, can shed new light on the readers' study of literature.

The following are suggestions for handling resistance to individual reader response and to response groups:

1. Give credit for thoughtful, careful responses only. Emphasize specificity of responses. Avoid rewarding vagueness. If necessary, give examples of the types of responses which are most effective, still allowing flexibility and creativity. (For example, simply relating the plot is not a productive response to literature when students are striving for a critical reading.)
2. If students say they do not have a response, ask them to address the aspects of the work that create this feeling. Ask them to look again at the text. Students should realize that they do not have to be enthralled with a piece of literature to respond to it and that what they bring to the page is just as important as what is on the page.
3. Structure groups carefully at first so that more expressive students are spread among the response groups to stimulate

discussion. Use a combination of peer and teacher evaluation of the groups.

4. When striving for an "interpretive community" reading, allow students who do not agree with the group to write a dissenting opinion.
5. Realize that any cooperative effort takes practice to become more and more effective, just as any new method does. Students grow to enjoy their interaction with texts.

The following assumptions are made regarding the study described in this teaching guide:

1. This work will not be the first one studied for the quarter or semester.
2. Students are familiar with the elements of fiction and have a working knowledge of vocabulary needed to discuss literature—tone, style, point of view, symbolism, simile, metaphor, personification, plot, theme, connotation, irony, imagery, paradox—or else the teacher will help them to understand the terms before this text is introduced.

3. Students are accustomed to working in both small and large groups, or they have been prepared for it and understand that every person's contribution is valuable.
4. Students are accustomed to using the response journal, or the teacher will prepare them accordingly.

Potential for Teaching. Any teacher of literature can immediately recognize the wealth of teaching potential in Aiken's beautifully rendered, provocative story of Paul Haselman's severance from the world of reality. The poetic quality of the narrative captivates readers and introduces them to an enchanting fantasy world. The shocking ending typically evokes in students a desire to get back into the story to see how it works, how the author accomplishes the story, what makes it successful and effective. Its accessibility to students and its richness in theme, psychological interest, symbolism, character revelation, imagery, and style make possible a variety of instructional approaches. Whether used in a unit on psychological literature, self-identity, or modern American literature, this haunting story is not one that is read and quickly forgotten. The story should be appropriate for most students from ninth to twelfth grades, depending upon the reading skills of the students. Perhaps at the ninth grade level, students studying the story should have above-average reading skills.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. "Snow" is a challenging story for adolescents since its narrator is a twelve-year-old who progresses through a deterioration of his personality into psychosis. The symptoms exhibited by the protagonist closely resemble those of schizophrenia. Although students will be at least familiar with the term, they will probably not recognize the clinical aspects of Paul's symptoms. However, without knowing the technicalities, they can relate to his isolation and alienation in school and at home since adolescents frequently experience these feelings. After an initial reading of the story, followed by reaction and formulation of questions generated by that reading, students will benefit from a carefully guided second reading. (The teacher has the option of introducing technical language and explanation as postreading activity following the initial reading or as prereading activity.)

In addition to the possibility of difficulty related to point of view, problems might also be encountered as a result of shifts as the story is narrated; however, any confusion can easily be ameliorated by a carefully guided second reading.

Although the story's vocabulary should present no problems for average high school students, some possibilities for vocabulary study are suggested in the prereading activities of this teaching guide.

Overall, the interest that the story holds for most adolescent readers should transcend any difficulties they might encounter.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

The teacher should choose the objectives pertinent to the purposes of the study.

After studying "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," the students will be able to . . .

New Criticism

1. demonstrate close and critical reading of the text for details that illustrate the author's purpose
2. identify and explain symbolism in the story
3. demonstrate an understanding of the rationale for the author's choice of particular imagery
4. demonstrate an understanding of the effects of recurring imagery in the story and how this imagery supports the author's purpose and the universal theme
5. evaluate connotative distinctions that create mood and effect and that support the author's purpose
6. recognize the irony and paradox inherent in the work

Neo-Aristotelian

7. show how symbols are used to unify other imagery and to suggest theme

8. demonstrate understanding of time shifts during the story and reconstruct the chronology of events

9. show how the story is organized to emphasize the protagonist's gradual regression

10. demonstrate an understanding of literary techniques employed by the author to create the overall effect of the work

11. identify point of view in the story and demonstrate its importance to the story's effect on the reader

Archetypal

12. demonstrate knowledge of the collective unconscious and archetypes in general

13. identify the initiation archetype and show how the story relates to it

14. demonstrate an understanding of how color imagery fits into the winter phase of the archetypal cyclical pattern

15. demonstrate how the imagery in the story, particularly in Section II, fits archetypal criteria of a tragic work

16. show an understanding of Jung's concept of the "shadow" self and its relationship to this story

Psychological

17. demonstrate an understanding of schizophrenia as it relates to this story
18. identify symptoms that indicate the protagonist's mental illness
19. demonstrate an understanding of psychological terminology necessary to understand the story
20. demonstrate a knowledge of the difference between psychotic and normal behavior as relevant to the story

Reader Response

21. express freely and openly in a response journal their reaction to the story and demonstrate its effect on the reader
22. work effectively in small groups to achieve a community reading of the story
23. share democratically and acceptingly in response groups
24. react appropriately to interpret meaning in related pieces of literature
25. respond appropriately to prereading activities and prompts designed to elicit personal reactions to and interpretations of the work
26. demonstrate knowledge of the dynamics of small and large group discussion and inquiry

Prereading Activities

1. The teacher may wish to teach some of the following words directly, either before or after the story has been read the first time.
    A. luxuriate
    B. encroached
    C. prestidigitation
    D. perfunctory
    E. desiccated
    F. funnelled
    G. severance
    H. delusion
    I. illusion
    J. sibilance
2. Write the words *schizophrenia* and *the unconscious* on the board. Have students do a brainstorming activity such as clustering, webbing, or mapping to elicit what knowledge they have of these terms. Then make two columns under each word on the board, one labelled "Correct Assumption" and the other "False Assumption." As the students share their reactions, list each one in the appropriate column, adding any necessary information that students have left out so that after the activity students will be able to write a brief description of these terms in their journals. Assure the students that many people share misinformation about these terms and that both false and correct assumptions are needed to clarify the definitions for the purposes of this study. Discussion should follow. An accurate definition and description of the symptoms of schizophrenia can be found in a recent edition of an encyclopedia. It should be noted that current theories

probably differ somewhat from those held at the time Aiken wrote "Snow," and perhaps an older edition would be helpful in clarifying the differences. For a concise discussion of Freud's concept of the unconscious, see Guerin, et al., pp. 122-23.

3. Have students freewrite about "a place you go or an activity you engage in to 'escape' the pressures of school/home/life." These might or might not be shared in small groups. Sharing should generate discussion of various escape mechanisms. Then have students organize their ideas into a paragraph (or a poem) in their journals.

4. Write the word *snow* on the board. Have the students, using brainstorming techniques such as clustering, webbing, mapping, listing, or other free-association methods, react to this word. These might be shared by listing reactions on the board in two categories—"Positive" and "Negative"—to explore various connotations of the word, along with feelings and associations it evokes in different people. Some students might like to represent their reactions in drawings.

5. Have students freewrite in their journals about their most vivid memory involving snow. These might be shared with the whole class or in smaller groups.

6. Hand out copies of "Rivers" by Martin Jamison (see Appendix A).

Have students read the poem and respond in their journals to the following questions, adapted from Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader*:

A. What is happening in the poem?

B. What did you feel as you read?

C. What in your own experience did this reading of the poem evoke?

D. What word(s), image(s), line(s) impressed you most?

Have students share their responses with partners or in small groups. (An opportunity exists here to introduce the concepts of irony, tension, and paradox inherent in a New Critical approach to instruction, since this poem, with its vivid imagery, is an excellent vehicle for such a study.)

7. Review the stages of the initiation archetype. Have students brainstorm in their journals about the protagonists in adolescent novels they have read who have moved through these stages. Then list on the board conflicts faced by the protagonists in these novels. Make parallels between these problems and the archetypal "journey" concept to show how they correspond. Have students write a journal entry on "An Experience Through Which I Matured." Students might share their responses in groups or with partners.

8. Have students read William Faulkner's "Two Soldiers," James Hurst's "The Scarlet Ibis," or any short work which is based upon the initiation archetype. The teacher might decide to divide the class into groups assigned to read different short stories of this type. After reading them, the groups should work as units to outline the stages of initiation through which the protagonist passes. Each group should select a reporter to relay their findings to the class.

9. Conduct a class discussion about the possibilities for a story with the title, "Silent Snow, Secret Snow." Students might be asked to make some predictions about the story following discussion of the title.

10. Distribute copies of Robert Frost's poem "Desert Places" (see Appendix B). Have students read the poem carefully or read it aloud to them the first time. Then have them answer the following questions in their journals:

    A. What do you think the poet means by "I have it in me so much nearer home / To scare myself with my own desert places"?

    B. Why do you think the poet uses the term "desert places" in a poem about snow?

C. How is this comparison a paradox? How is it a logical comparison? (Students should look in a dictionary to find the various meanings of the word *desert*.)

D. What is ambiguous about the "it" in the poem? To what might "it" refer?

After students have answered the questions in their journals, have them share their feelings with partners and then with the class.

Guide for Reading

The questions in the Guide for Reading are to be answered, when appropriate, in the students' response journals during the second reading of "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" and will be discussed in four or five small groups after the completion of the second reading. Each group might be assigned several questions on which to focus. This is an excellent opportunity for group inquiry. The teacher may assign each group the questions appropriate for a particular approach: one group might be assigned questions pertinent to a New Critical approach; another, questions relevant to an archetypal approach; and so on.

A discussion leader and a recorder should be either appointed by the teacher or selected by group members. The leader will keep the group on task, and the recorder will transcribe the group's responses and report them to the class when all of the groups come together. Anyone in the large group may comment and ask questions.

Part of the evaluation for the study can be based on response journals, which can be graded by the teacher on completeness and effort, giving recognition to the apparent careful thought the student has applied to the reading and to the questions. Each member of a group will also receive a participation evaluation from the other members of the group, and the teacher will assign a group grade based on quality of answers and group cooperation and participation. The teacher should develop appropriate rating devices for student and teacher use.

Note that some questions in the Guide are designed primarily to alert the reader to certain aspects of the work and do not need to be answered in the journal. Because there are more questions in the Guide than can possibly be used, the teacher should choose those questions which are most appropriate for the teacher's objectives and for the students in the class.

Postreading Activities

Students, with teacher input, should have options in choosing which postreading activities they prefer to complete.

1. "The thing was above all a secret, something to be previously concealed from Mother and Father; and to that very fact it owed an enormous part of its deliciousness. . . he carried around with him everywhere a

warm and persistent and increasingly beautiful sense of possession . . . of protection" (McFarland 116). Have students write a paragraph in their journals in which they explain the meaning of this quotation, focusing on the author's choice of words and their connotations, and relating this passage to the initiation aspects of the story.

2. Have students read Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." In journal entries, they should compare and contrast the situations and the speakers in the poem and in "Snow" and show how at the end of the poem, the speaker differs from Paul at the end of the story.

3. Conrad Aiken has used snow as a symbol in his story. In their journals, have students freewrite about what they think the snow symbolizes. Then refer them to the text to find quotations and other evidence to support their ideas. Finally, have them organize their thoughts in a final draft in their journal or for a paper to be shared in small groups.

4. The postman might also be considered a symbol in a story. Students should reread the sections concerning the postman and decide what they think the postman represents. (Follow the same procedure as for Postreading #3.)

5. Most adolescents (and grownups as well) can relate to Paul's daydreaming in school. Have students design a school in which

students might feel more challenged, more successful. They should describe their school's physical arrangement, curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and organization of classes, and explain why they believe their school to be more challenging and success- oriented.

6. Have students write a paragraph discussing the following: In many stories the plot follows a pattern of rising action to a climax or crisis, after which there is falling action and a conclusion. If "Snow" follows this pattern, where is the crisis? If it does not, how does it deviate from that pattern?

7. Have students write a poem that they think Paul might write (one in which they assume the persona of Paul).

8. The following quotation appears in the next-to-last paragraph of the story: "Listen! it said. We'll tell you the last, the most beautiful and secret story—. . . a story that gets smaller and smaller—it comes inward instead of opening like a flower—it is a flower becoming a seed—a little cold seed—do you hear? . . ." Have students write about what they think this passage means and how it is related to the story's theme.

9. Have students create a drawing, realistic or abstract, which illustrates the story's effect on the reader or that reflects a reaction to the story.

10. Have students illustrate some image in Section II of the story, making certain that their illustrations are consistent with the mood and tone of this section. Their choice of medium and color should reflect Aiken's purpose and the effect of the imagery in this section.

11. Have students draw a map of Paul's journey from school to his house and label the landmarks of his journey.

12. Although certainly it is not as extreme as Paul's in Aiken's story, everyone has a part of the self that is seldom, if ever, shown to the rest of the world. In their journals, have students write about two sides of themselves—the one they show in school and the one which schoolmates or teachers do not know.

13. In a journal entry, have students explain to what extent they do or do not relate to, and have sympathy for, Paul.

14. The author does not give any background information about Paul beyond what we learn regarding recent events in his life. Have students write an incident or two that would help fill in the gaps up to the point at which he begins to lose contact with reality.

15. If students are interested in the seasonal archetypes reflected in the story, supply them with more information and have them write an explanation of the imagery and events in the story that reflect the winter archetype.

16. One critic reported that Aiken, at age 11, witnessed the murder of his mother by his father, who then committed suicide. Have students write about what significance this fact might have in Aiken's apparent interest in abnormal psychology and the workings of the unconscious mind. One or more students might be interested in doing biographical research on Aiken and reporting it to the class.

17. Have students write a character sketch of Paul Haselman from the point of view of his teacher (perhaps in the form of a "progress report"), the doctor (perhaps in the form of "patient log"), his classmate Deirdre (perhaps in the form of a note to another classmate), or his parents (perhaps in the form of a diary or journal one of them might have kept).

18. After viewing the film of "Snow," have students compare and contrast the two presentations and their effects on the reader/viewer. In a paper on this subject, they might be asked to explain which one they think is the more effective and why. (Possible sources for film rental: CCM Films, Inc., 34 MacQuesten Parkway South, Mt. Vernon, NY 10550; Film Center, Inc., 20 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; and Western Cinema Guild, Inc., 244 Kearney Street, San Francisco, CA 94108.)

Evaluation and Enrichment

Teacher and students should decide which of the following evaluative tools best reflect their study. In addition to the evaluation exercises listed here, part of the evaluation should take into account the response journals, which will include responses to the questions from the Guide for Reading and the postreading activities. It is also suggested that part of the evaluation be based on group assignments.

1. Have students write a paper in which they contrast the two worlds of Paul Haselman, using quotations from the story to support their ideas.
2. In the initiation theme in literature, a young protagonist is involved in experiences through which he or she gains insight into himself or herself and grows as a human being, sometimes with attendant pain and suffering. Have students write a paper in which they show how this story does and/or does not fit into this category.
3. Divide students into groups to create objective questions suitable for a postreading evaluation. Each group should be challenged to create twenty questions, a mixture of multiple choice, true or false, and matching. Students should try to formulate questions that stimulate thinking. The teacher can assemble student-created questions for a reading check to be administered to the whole class.
4. One critic of the film version of "Snow" has said that the film is a failure because Aiken's dialogue suggests an eloquent snow world, but

the images on the screen fall short of the beauty of the narrative. Have students who have viewed the film agree or disagree in a formal paper, citing examples from the story and from the film. They might also discuss one or more examples of literary works adapted for film which they consider inferior, equal, or superior to the literary version, and address the question of what contributed to the success or failure of the film version of "Snow" as compared to the film version of another literary work.

5. One critic wrote that a psychological case history tries to tell how the schizophrenic looks to the normal world, but "Snow" tells how the world looks to the schizophrenic, since it is narrated in the limited omniscient point of view. Have students write a paper in which they show how the story would be different if it had been narrated by Paul's mother. They might want to retell a section (e.g., Section III) from her viewpoint.

6. "Snow," written in the lyric mode, contains elements of poetry and prose fiction. It has a story line in addition to poetic elements such as sound and visual imagery, word play, and symbolism. Have students write a paper in which they support this thesis with evidence from the text.

7. Critics have posed explanations for what happens in "Snow" as follows:

A. The story symbolically represents the alienation of the creative artist in a structured world.

B. Paul is symbolic of the "lost misfit" separated from the rest of the world.

C. The story represents the failure of society to understand and save a person in need.

D. The story shows the power of a fantasy world.

E. "Snow" illustrates the descent into mental illness.

Ask for which of these ideas the students find the most evidence in the story and have them write a paper in which they support their position, using the text to support their choice(s).

8. The story does not tell the reader anything about Paul's life before he becomes lost in his snow fantasy. Have students write a biography of Paul that would fill in the gaps about his past life. Challenge them to write as closely as possible to Aiken's style.

9. When a literary work is tragic, the archetypal hero is isolated and is subsequently overthrown. Such works frequently contain images of a modern desert with garbage heaps, ruins, or sinister geometrical shapes. In the winter seasonal archetype, the time is night (the equivalent of death), and the colors are black, grey, or white. The setting contains cold concrete, bare trees, and other images of barren

land. Have students write a paper in which they trace imagery in Section II which supports an archetypal reading, citing specific examples and showing how they are related to the story's events.

Related Works

1. "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Charlotte Perkins Gilman). The female protagonist narrates the story of her progression into insanity while she is forced to undergo a "rest cure" in a room with bars on the windows and a gate across the door's threshold. (This is an excellent psychological study which could be used with the critical approaches emphasized in this guide, in addition to the feminist approach.)
2. *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (Joanne Greenberg/Hannah Green). A young woman gives a first-person account of her schizophrenia which takes the reader into her fantasy world, through her therapy, and back into reality. She recovers with the expert guidance of her brilliant analyst.
3. *Ordinary People* (Judith Guest). A young boy suffers psychological problems as a result of the accidental death of his brother and his mother's subsequent rejection.
4. *Demian* (Herman Hesse). A young man struggles with his "shadow self" to become fully integrated—an excellent illustration of Jung's types, shadows, and persona. This work is also useful in

following Northrup Frye's seasonal patterns archetype. (See Patricia Gatlin and Carol G. Smith's treatment of *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* in *Sourcebook for English Teachers,* NEH Institute on Literary Criticism and the Teaching of Literature, Auburn University, 1987.)

5. "The Scarlet Ibis" (James Hurst). The narrator learns about pride and a cruel streak in himself and others from his relationship with a special little brother.
6. *A Separate Peace* (John Knowles). A young protagonist views retrospectively the traumatic events of his prep school days, his realization of the complexities of his own personality, his relationship with a best friend for whose death he feels responsible, and his ultimate growth to maturity.
7. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (Carson McCullers). A young girl makes a painful journey toward maturation as she encounters the adult world.
8. *Lisa, Bright and Dark* (John Neufeld). When a high school student senses her developing schizophrenia, she finds little help from adults, who ignore or minimize the signs of her illness, but she finds some comfort in assistance offered by her friends.
9. *The Bell Jar* (Sylvia Plath). This autobiographical novel, an account of the author's mental breakdown, gives insight into the effects of society's

expectations on a young career woman. (Also excellent for a feminist study.)

10. *A Catcher in the Rye* (J. D. Salinger). This classic novel relates Holden Caulfield's struggle to cope with the hypocrisy and deception that he finds in the adult world he is expected to enter.

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Guide for Reading

"Silent Snow, Secret Snow"

Before proceeding to use this guide, read the entire story and immediately write in your journal your reaction to the story, along with questions you have about it. React to the story in any way that you wish in your journal. You might want to talk about several of the things that

—frustrated you

—made you angry

—made you sad

—amused you

—puzzled you

—made you think

—made you feel sympathy or empathy

—surprised you

—shocked you

—frightened you

—impressed you

—reminded you of something that happened to you or to someone you know

—were repugnant to you

—taught you something

—made you want to know more

—made you more aware

—made you feel concerned

—provoked you in any other way

Keep the questions that you formulate upon your first reading in mind as you complete a second, more careful reading. As you read, answer, in your journal, questions from the following list that your teacher has indicated you should answer. Note that some questions are designed merely to alert you to some aspect of the work and do not need to be answered in writing. Read through the questions first to prepare yourself before your second reading. Make note of your original questions that remain after the second reading. These will be discussed in your group.

1. Remembering the prereading discussion in class, list the symptoms of schizophrenia in your journal (or refer to the paragraph you wrote describing this disorder). As you read, keep a log of the symptoms Paul exhibits and be prepared to cite examples of incidents from the text that suggest that Paul is schizophrenic.
2. Notice how the author builds suspense in the story. Be prepared to discuss his techniques in your group. Take notes on this as you read.
3. Notice the point of view in the story. Be prepared to explain why the author may have chosen this point of view, how the effect would be

changed if the perspective changed to that of a detached narrator, and why the first person point of view would be problematic.

4. Note the imagery related to the snow. As you read, lightly check the margin to mark where this imagery appears. After completing the reading, make three lists on a page of your journal, labeling them *Simile, Metaphor,* and *Personification*. Categorize the imagery you identified in the story. Be prepared to tell how this imagery is effective in creating the impression that the snow is desirable to Paul.
5. Notice that the story is divided into four sections. Be prepared to discuss the significance of these divisions, along with their settings and the events in each one. Be prepared to show Paul's progression from Section I through Section IV and to show its importance in the story. What might have been the author's purpose for dividing the story into these sections?
6. How did you feel about the characters? Which ones seem realistic? Which ones, if any, are stereotypes?
7. In the initiation theme in literature, a young protagonist usually goes on a quest or journey—literal, figurative, or both. What journey(s) or quest(s) does Paul undertake?
8. As you read, list Paul's character traits and be prepared to support each trait with evidence from the text.

9. One critic has suggested that in Section I of the story, during the geography lesson, Paul is a vicarious explorer. Note several images and incidents that support this statement. Continue to trace the explorer image in Section II. What images of exploration do you find?

10. In the first paragraph, Paul's "secret" is compared to the following: a beautiful trinket, a rare stamp, an old coin, a few tiny gold links found trodden out of shape on the path in the park, a pebble of carnelian (a bright gem), a seashell distinguishable from all others by an unusual spot or stripe. Be prepared to add three or more items of your own to this list of "peculiarly beautiful trinkets" to be "preciously concealed."

11. In many instances in the story, Paul is shown to pay close attention to detail. Give examples of his detailed descriptions.

12. The shifts in the narration of the story might present a problem if the reader is not careful. Give examples of Paul's mind shifts in Section I.

13. The phrase "at whatever pain to others" is repeated several times during the story, almost in the manner of a refrain in a song. Looking particularly at the places the phrase occurs in the story, be prepared to discuss the effect of this repetition and why you think the author would use this device.

14. In Section I, the author interrupts Paul's thoughts with parenthetical statements about what is happening in the classroom. Be prepared to

discuss why you think he interjects these statements. What effect do they have on your understanding of what is happening in the story?

15. During your reading, notice the number of references to something unnameable: "It" or "this thing." What is it that Paul speaks of? Be aware of the point in the story at which you begin to realize to what the narrator is referring.

16. What is the significance of the number of houses on Paul's street, from the corner to his house?

17. As you read Section II, write words in your journal that connote a dreary mood. Be prepared to discuss these words in regard to their usefulness in achieving the author's purpose in this section.

18. Record the images of grey, black, and white in Section II and be prepared to discuss how these images affect the mood in this section.

19. The character of Paul changes between Section I and Section IV. Note the changes from section to section and be prepared to trace them and show how these changes indicate the progression of Paul's condition.

20. In the description of Paul's snowless world (Section II, in particular) are references to geometric shapes and figures. Give examples of these and be prepared to discuss how you think they are used to achieve the author's purpose in this section of the story.

21. The reader experiences Paul's snowless world as Paul makes his way home from school (Section II). Note words and phrases that reveal that this world is undesirable to Paul.

22. Characters in the story who represent society are the mother, the father, the teacher, and the doctor. Why do you think each of these characters is unable to reach Paul or to realize what is happening to him? Be prepared to support your answers with references to the story.

23. In the midst of Paul's beautiful, encompassing snow world in Section IV, his mother opens his bedroom door. The author says that Paul struggles to find the right "exorcising" words. Why do you suppose he uses the word "exorcising"? Why do you suppose Paul says "Mother! Go away! I hate you!"?

24. What is the total effect that the author achieves in Section IV?

25. Water imagery appears throughout Section IV. Find at least four examples of this water imagery, and explain how it contributes to the effect the author is creating in this part of the story.

26. What is the significance of the postman in the story? What is represented in the postman's muffled footsteps?

27. Why do you suppose Aiken chose snow as the "blanket" that covers up Paul's real world?

28. In a discussion of symbolism relating to "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," Morse Peckham notes that

> Conrad Aiken was faced with the problem of dramatizing the process by which the young boy rejects the world of reality and enters a world of his own. He could, and he did, describe part of the process through various incidents at home and at school. But he had no such way of describing the boy's mental process, the experience of moving away from reality. Aiken realized, of course, that dealing with reality causes tension and stress for everyone. He needed something to express an escape from that tension and stress, and he chose snow. (64)

If you were writing a story and needed something else to express an escape from reality, what would you choose? Why?

29. In the same discussion mentioned above, Peckham writes about the use of symbols in literature.

> It makes it possible to say something new, something for which no word or combination of words exists. It also makes it possible to reduce a great variety of meanings into a single word or object which can represent these meanings more concisely, and often more dramatically. (64)

Think of other stories you have read that contained symbols; list these symbols and what you think they represented.

Appendix A

Rivers

One alternative,

when the air

in the classroom thickened

and the words on the page

spread out as dull as mud,

one alternative

was to follow the streams

that twisted down among the words.

You remember.

You would let your eyes

move out of focus,

and you'd ride

the snaky channels

to their own level

It was like following a maze.

and as you floated down

maybe sunlight yelled mutely

through the smells

of dark water and moist earth,
maybe ducks beat past so smartly
that the air squeaked.

Once I saw one
coursing through the page
all the way
from top to bottom,
as distinct and purposeful
as the Susquehanna.
It was a passage to remember,
but since then
I have learned that
printers call them rivers,
and that skillful ones notice them
before they pour
into readers' hands,
and dam their flow
with clever spacing.
Well.

In the innocent pursuit
of their craft,
the printers slog along the bank
with the teachers and the parents
who have long since
quit rafting
down those streams.

Martin Jamison
Gray's Sporting Journal
Winter 1986: 19

Appendix B

Desert Places

Snow falling and night falling fast, oh fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.
The woods around it have it—it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent-spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.
And lonely as it is, that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less—
A blanket whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.
They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars—where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

Robert Frost

The Awakening

Kate Chopin

MaDonna K. Leenay
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Overview

Critical Commentary. When *The Awakening* was published in 1899, the critical reaction was hostile. The author, Kate Chopin, a widowed mother of six, had been accepted as a "local colorist" until its publication. However, critics declared her new novel "an essentially vulgar story." Another called it "sad, bad, and mad" (Gilbert and Gubar, Introduction. "Chopin" 991). It was withdrawn from circulation by the library in her native St. Louis, and she was rejected not only by the local arts society but also by many relatives and friends (Seyersted 175).

The central problem of the novel lies in the choice made by the main character, Edna Pontellier—specifically, the decision to end her life. Edna Pontellier is a Kentucky-born mother of two and wife of Leonce Pontellier, a Creole New Orleans businessman. As the novel unfolds, Edna becomes conscious of her lack of satisfaction in her domestic and social duties. Finally, where she had learned to swim the summer before, she casts off her clothing and swims far out into the "seductive sea."

Edna's suicide resulted in furor when the novel was published. Chopin's friends persuaded her to defend herself publicly. Her explanation of the final death scene is filled with dry humor and little remorse:

> Having a group of people at my disposal, I thought it might be entertaining (to myself) to throw them together and see what would happen. I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her own damnation as she did. If I had had the slightest intimation of such a thing I would have excluded her from the company. But when I found out what she was up to, the play was half over and it was then too late. (Ewell 157)

But the act of suicide is rooted in perhaps another possibility: Edna Pontellier as a miscreant in an upper-class Creole society. She reevaluates her role of wife and mother and her role in society. Also personally problematic is her questioning of religious and other cultural values. Edna Pontellier clearly was an anomaly in the culture. Few understood her dilemma. Kate Chopin (1851-1904) herself suffered in this same way. So shocked were Americans after reading *The Awakening* that they chose to forget its author, and for more than half a century, Kate Chopin was thoroughly neglected in the American canon

(Storm 7). As one friend spoke about her situation: "It was unbelievable how she was crushed as it was truth as she saw it and people would not see" (Storm 17).

To help students to "see the truth" as Chopin saw it is the main objective of this guide. Two methods used to achieve this goal are New Criticism and feminist criticism. A central tenet of New Criticism is to replace the reliance of the student on the teacher with the necessary skills so the student can read the text as well as any "authority." The major task of the critic is to judge the unique language system of a work of literature and to point out where that system excels. New Critics look for patterns in words and images. It is also the tendency of the New Critic to categorize the elements of the novel in terms of irony, tension, and paradox. The New Critic provides an explanation for even those elements that may defy categorization. While a New Critical approach is useful to explore the crucial symbols and vivid imagery used by Chopin, some aspects of this work defy such a paradigm. New Criticism is only one way to unmask the description of what was occurring in the outside world of Edna Pontellier.

Another way to gain understanding of the main character and her fate is to view Edna Pontellier and her world through a feminist perspective. This young woman appears to others as a misfit. Yet, in another sense, she appears incredibly sane. Does her increasing self-knowledge and awareness of her conflict indicate her sanity or her madness? The "madwoman" created by Chopin may be seen in some sense as Chopin's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. In *The Madwoman in the Attic,* Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend that the creation of this "mad creature" is a means for female authors to "come to terms with their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be" (79). Added to that tension are the traditional masculine patterns of the novel in a patriarchal society: "the rise of a middle-class hero past dramatically depicted social and economic obstacles to a higher and more suitable position in the world" (67). Here we can see that literature does not mirror reality; it produces an image of reality (Poovey). By using a feminist perspective, we can see the distorted reality of the world in which Edna Pontellier lives and the conflict she may feel as she is torn between the irreconcilable contradictions of her art and her gender. That distortion needs to be made visible to the reader. A feminist reading of the text enables us to see the distortion by investigating how the sex/gender system has been reproduced in literary texts and how those texts have helped reproduce this system in readers (Poovey). Activities are designed to help the students sense this distortion.

By following the New Critical and feminist approaches, we can see Edna Pontellier in several ways. Though each approach may at times seem to undercut the message of the other, each is also enhancing the novel's richness and our understanding of Edna's final swim out into the sea.

Potential for Teaching. The ending of the novel presents the most puzzling and yet intriguing aspect of the novel. Is Edna's death an act of liberation or a futile act of self-destruction? Since the reader needs to be mature enough to appreciate the ambiguity in the novel, upper-level eleventh or twelfth grade students are the target audience for this guide. Older students can understand that perhaps Chopin's intention was to be ambiguous. They may even delight in the debates that inevitably accompany such ambiguity. As one student wrote on an end-of-the-year evaluation of all texts read: "*The Awakening* brought to class the most colorful and involved discussion all year. I found our class still arguing about it even minutes after [we were] dismissed and in the hallway as we walked away."

For the purposes of this guide, the text is divided into five sections: the exposition (Ch. 1-6), the emerging differences between Edna and other characters (Ch. 7-12), the beginning of the awakening inside Edna (Ch. 13-20), the changes that occur on the outside (Ch. 21-29), and events leading to her final decision (Ch. 30-39). Each section offers ideas for the exploration of symbols and imagery used by Chopin and ways for us to better understand Edna Pontellier's world and her decisions. A Guide for Reading is provided to help students to track the text's many symbols and images.

Challenges for the Adolescent Reader. In order for students to understand the novel, it is necessary for them to appreciate how gender is a creations of society, not necessarily an infallible "given"; to see cultural restrictions imposed upon women; and finally, to understand the reaction of at least one female against those gender creations and restrictions. Since New Orleans is the setting for the novel, an abundance of French is used in the text. Translations of the French words and phrases used are provided at the end of the guide, though it is not expected that the student will memorize them.

It is also important for students to understand why *The Awakening* was considered so threatening and therefore failed to become a part of the canon of American literature for over fifty years. The exclusion of Chopin's work suggests that her concerns were somehow unimportant to or even subversive to the American public. Critic Paul Lauter confirms the potential impact of the canon: "The literary canon is, in short, a means by which culture validates social power" (19). Chopin's voice was thus subdued for a time but no longer remains quiet.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying *The Awakening*, the students will be able to. . .

New Criticism

1. identify the symbols used in the text

2. trace ways in which imagery reflects changes within the main character
3. contrast Edna Pontellier and Adele Ratignolle and Madame Reisz and describe how the latter two are used as foils to create and distinguish Edna's unique character
4. understand the use of metaphors to portray Edna's awakening

Feminist

5. observe society's creation of gender distinctions
6. identify the values and rules of Creole society, especially as they affect the female characters
7. trace Edna's growing disinterest in her social and domestic affairs as the novel progresses
8. explore the possible reasons for Edna's finding death as her only alternative to the cultural limitations imposed upon her gender

Prereading Activities

Prereading Activities to Introduce the Novel

1. In order to understand the multiple meanings of *awakening*, ask students to brainstorm on the many ways a person may experience an awakening.
2. Assign various students to report on characteristics of the Southern culture and lifestyle, Roman Catholicism (the religion of the Pontelliers),

the lifestyles of women in the late nineteenth century, Creole society, and the French influence in the South.

3. To appreciate how the main character presented a radical departure from the stereotypical depiction of women, present two images of women to the students. Joan Miro's *A Standing Woman* shows a black sculpted figure reduced to breasts and a womb-like opening. A contrasting image may be a female portraiture by Jean Baptist-Corot, such as *The Springtime of Life,* Claude Monet's *Lady with a Parasol,* or another Impressionist work. Questions may provoke the students' response to each work of art, the aspects of womanhood each artist emphasizes, the prevailing mood or feeling of both works, and the challenges to their notion of femininity and womanhood.

4. Individuals or small groups may wish to construct collages of women in our society, as dictated by our advertisements: what women are supposed to look like, talk like, smell like, dress like, or be like. Another alternative would be for students to create their own depiction of women. Afterward, students may wish to discuss or explain the images they have created or chosen.

Prereading Activities for Chapters 1-6

1. Ask students to respond in their learning logs or journals to the following question: What expectations does society put upon women?

For Females: What expectations do you feel as a female? For Males: What expectations do you have of females?

2. In order for students to understand the unfamiliar culture of the Creole world, offer them the following exercise so they can better sense its uniqueness:

> Imagine that you are an alien in the Creole society of Louisiana in the late 1800's and that you are supposed to report back to your planet as much as you can, in the most objective way possible. While reading *The Awakening,* record your perceptions about the society of the Creoles, their cultural practices, religious beliefs, the roles of men and women, and anything else you find curious or interesting.

3. Together, the students and the teacher should consider the parrot presented at the outset of the novel. The teacher should read aloud the following passage, and students should project their perceptions of what the novel may be about from the opening passage:

> A green and yellow parrot, which hung in a cage outside the door, kept repeating over and over: "*Allez-vous-en! Allez-vous-en! Sapristi!* [Get out! Get out! For God's sake!] That's all right!"

> He could speak a little Spanish, and also a language which nobody understood, unless it was the mocking-bird that hung on the other side of the door, whistling his fluty notes out upon the breeze with maddening persistence. (Chopin 265)

Students should be prepared to discuss the parrot's significance as they read the first six chapters and should see how it illustrates some of the main issues of the novel. For example, the notion of confinement is immediately introduced. The parrot has a voice that repeats a frustration that the others living in the house often feel but seldom realize. The parrot's prophetic message is finally heeded by the main character.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 1-6

1. To address Prereading #1, students might be asked to share their views on society's expectations of women and their own expectations. Other discussion questions might include the following:
    - A. What are society's expectations of men?
    - B. How are those expectations different from society's expectations of women?
    - C. How are today's expectations different from those experienced by Edna Pontellier?
    - D. How may they be similar or even worse?

    E. Why does Edna not seem to be thriving in her society?
    F. What are her interests and expectations?
    G. What will happen if her interests and society's expectations clash?

2. To answer Prereading #2, students, working in small groups, should compile their impressions as alien reporters. They should also decide what their impressions of this society are and whether they would like to live there. Group reporters can share their observations with the class.
3. To answer Prereading #3, students should be prepared to explicate, on paper, the opening passage of the text, discussing its symbolism and predicting its importance to the rest of the reading and to any other symbols or images they have encountered that they deem significant.

Prereading Activities for Chapters 7-12

1. Adele Ratignolle and Edna Pontellier differ radically from each other in clothing and appearance, manner and perspective. Their differences are accentuated throughout the novel. Students should try to form a mental image of both of the women as they read by closely tracking the adjectives and dialogue used in the descriptions of the women.
2. Since music, especially the sound of the ocean, "speaks" to Edna throughout the novel, consider its effect on the individual student.

Since tapes are available of sounds of nature and of the ocean, the teacher may wish to play such a tape for students to discover what effects such music has on them. Consider also the combined images of swimming and the addictive quality of music and the power of music to stimulate and to produce tranquility.

3. In Chapter 9, the narrator states:

> [The parrot] was the only being present who possessed sufficient candor to admit that he was not listening to these gracious performances for the first time that summer. (288)

   Students should consider the significance of the passage and the necessity of personifying the parrot. They should also note the role of the parrot in the novel and its use as the voice of the narrator.

4. Students should be prepared to discuss Edna Pontellier's beginning signs of change and to recognize the ways that readers are made aware of that change.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 7-12

1. To extend Prereading #1, students might be asked to bring to class one object that represents Edna Pontellier or Adele Ratignolle. They should also be ready to give a brief oral explanation of how the object they chose represents that character.

2. To extend Prereading #2 and #4, small groups of students can gather to consider the following questions:
    - A. What is the function of music so far in the novel?
    - B. Contrast the music of the Farival twins and Madame Reisz. What is the effect of both types of music on Edna?
    - C. What is the connection between the effect of music and swimming on Edna?
    - D. Why does swimming become important to Edna?
3. Ask students to respond to the passage quoted in Prereading #3: If you were the parrot sitting in the parlor, what conclusions would you draw from the situation? Write a one-page essay using the first-person voice stating what you are observing and understanding about the situation, making your conclusions about the people in the room.

Prereading Activities for Chapters 13-20

1. To demonstrate the deep-rooted acceptance of tradition or practice, make a change in your classroom policy, especially as it may relate to gender. You might call only on females one day, on males the next; rearrange seating by genders; or ask students to wear gender signifiers. The purpose of the change would be to help students to understand what happens when gender is used as a divisive factor in our society.

2. Since these chapters involve a series of Edna's decisions, it is necessary to note their importance. Offer the following questions to students to guide their reading of this section of the novel:
    - A. How does going to church affect Edna in Chapter 13?
    - B. What role does Robert Lebrun play in the novel?
    - C. What effect does Robert have on Edna?
    - D. What are ways in which Edna changes her domestic routine? Why does she make the changes?
    - E. Why is it significant that Edna takes up painting? What benefits result?
    - F. What is Edna's effect on her husband? What does he think is happening?
    - G. How does nature reflect or affect what is happening within Edna? (Explain *macrocosm* and *microcosm* and the ancient supernatural belief that they have a sympathetic effect on each other.)
3. In class, have students read Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and note similarities of the husband and wife in Gilman's story and in Chopin's novel.
4. Ask students to continue to note the differences between Edna and Adele as seen in Chapter 16, especially on the subject of childbearing.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 13-20

1. To address Prereading #1, ask students to reflect in their journals on creating gender distinction. Can they see reasons for creating further distinction? Can they identify any unnecessary customs of gender distinction that exist in our society? Ask them to name at least one they believe is unnecessary and explain why it is.
2. Discuss the questions listed in Prereading #2, emphasizing Edna's growing rejection of customs, her social and domestic duties, her marriage, and institutionalized religion. Besides Edna's changing relationship to Adele, students should also note her growing interest in painting, swimming, and Robert Lebrun. Discuss her husband's perception of Edna's change as her becoming "mentally unbalanced," when the opposite may be true.
3. To extend Prereading #3, have students, in pairs, list similarities and differences between the couple in Gilman's short story and Chopin's novel. Note specifically the similarities in self-perception of the female characters, their husbands' perspectives, their function in society, their growing "dilemma," and their overall condition.

Prereading for Chapters 21-29

1. In these chapters, which depict Edna's awakening, point of view of various characters becomes a crucial element. There are two ways to

view Edna. Seen through the eyes of her husband and society, she is unstable. In her own eyes, she is only seeking fulfillment. Explain the schizophrenic role that female characters have played in other works of literature or the characters created by female writers, for example, in "The Lady of Shalott" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson and "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gillman. *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar is an excellent resource.

2. Yet another point of view is introduced when Edna's father arrives. With his visit, the changes in Edna become even more pronounced. Use the following questions as a discussion guide:

    A. Alert students to the importance of the Colonel's timely appearance. How does his visit affect both Edna and Leonce? What do we learn about him that creates disturbance in the household?

    B. Why is it significant that Edna's sister Janet is preparing now for marriage? Consider why a conflict is created when Edna is asked to attend.

    C. In these chapters we are also introduced to the character of Alcee Arobin. What role does he play in the novel? Consider whether you believe Edna really loves him or whether the question is unimportant.

   D. In Chapter 24, Edna puts down a book by Emerson before she retires. Consider why Chopin might have included this detail. (One of Emerson's most famous works was his essay outlining his beliefs regarding self-reliance.)

3. Have students respond to the following proverb in their journal:

   "He who has the gold makes the rules."

   Students should either affirm or deny the truth of the statement. They should support their reasoning with one example from the novel and one example from their own lives.

4. Students should continue to note the development of the imagery and symbolism by keeping a careful record of examples in their Guide for Reading.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 21-29

1. To extend Prereading #1, discuss Edna as a fragmented character, how her fragmentation can be related to her gender, and what results when she feels a discrepancy between what she is and who she ought to be.
2. To address Prereading #2, appraise the effects of Edna's father's visit on the Pontellier household. Ask students to respond to the following questions in writing or in a group discussion:
   A. Describe how Edna was raised.
   B. What does Edna's father wish for her to do?

   C. How does he advise Leonce Pontellier?
   D. What is the effect of introducing Edna's father at this point in the novel?

3. To address Prereading #3, discuss the relationship of money to power and help students to relate this issue to the novel.

Prereading Activities for Chapters 30-39

1. Use the following questions to prompt students to consider multiple interpretations of the "awakening":
   A. SOCIETAL: Edna's last contact with society or any large number of people is at the dinner party. Some critics compare the dinner party to the Last Supper. Alert students to consider this comparison as they read further in the novel.
   B. EMOTIONAL: How do Alcee Arobin and Robert Lebrun affect Edna? Do you think she is alienated from Robert or is she affected by his note? Why is Edna alienated from both men at the end of the novel?
   C. MATERNAL: Why is it significant that Adele's childbirth scene occurs at the end of the novel?
   D. SPIRITUAL: Why does Edna make the choice that she does at the end of this novel?

E. INTELLECTUAL: What conversation or bits of wisdom prompt Edna to make the decision that she does?

F. MYTHOLOGICAL: Edna is compared by Victor to "Venus rising from the foam." Why is this an especially apt comparison?

G. SENSUAL: Edna's final swim is wrapped in descriptive detail. Consider its significance.

2. Have students consider the following excerpt, telling them to prepare to explicate the passage the following day. Note specifically the truths that Edna and the Doctor share with each other, but also why they bring no solace to Edna.

> ". . . I'm not going to be forced into doing things. I don't want to go abroad. I want to be let alone. Nobody has any right—except children, perhaps—and even then. . . ."
>
> "The trouble is," sighed the Doctor, grasping her meaning intuitively, "that youth is given up to illusions. It seems to be a provision of Nature; a decoy to secure mothers for the race. And Nature takes no account of moral consequences, of arbitrary conditions which we create, and which we feel obliged to maintain at any cost."
>
> "Yes," she said. "The years that are gone seem like dreams—if one might go on sleeping and dreaming—but to

> wake up and find—oh! well! perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life." (Chopin 379-80)

Postreading Activities for Chapters 30-39

1. To address Prereading #1, #2, and #3, have students reconsider the implications of the word *awakening* by having them cluster the word in their journals and find as many interpretations of the word as they can. Students may extend this assignment in the form of an essay or a poem.
2. In order to contrast illusions and reality, put a continuum on the board, with the word *Illusions* on one end and *Reality* on the other. Where would Leonce Pontellier place the main characters on this continuum? (Who is living in the world of illusions in the novel? Who is living in a realistic world? Why might he think so?) Ask students to change the perspective to Adele's; to Madame Reisz's to Edna's father's; to Edna's sons'; to Edna's. Ask students what conclusions we can draw from such an exercise in perspective.

Evaluation

The following questions may be used as essay topics for evaluating students' understanding of *The Awakening*.

1. Identify the turning points of Edna's changing perspective on her life. Discuss why they are significant.
2. Show how one of the major images you have collected throughout the novel reflects the changes felt by Edna.
3. What does each of the three main characters represent? How can the three female characters be made to fit together to show a broader depiction of womanhood?
4. You are invited by the St. Louis Art Society, the organization that rejected Chopin, to explain Chopin's message. What would you say?
5. Listed below are six interpretations of Edna's final scene. Defend one interpretation which approximates your own understanding of the final scene. If no interpretation is satisfactory to you, create your own interpretation and support it. Second, choose one which seems to be the most contrary to your interpretation of the novel and explain why.

    A. INTERPRETATION BY PEGGY SKAGGS:

    Edna's sense of herself as a complete person makes impossible her role of wife and mother as defined by her society; yet she discovers that her role of mother also makes impossible her continuing development as an autonomous individual. So her thoughts as she walks into the sea comment profoundly on the special identity problems Chopin believes that women face. . . .

Unable to have a full human existence, Edna chooses to have none at all. (111)

B. INTERPRETATION BY BARBARA C. EWELL:

Like the ocean, Mademoiselle's music speaks to Edna's deepest self. And it is the invitation of that self—neither fully conscious nor rational—that Edna pursues, leading her to follow blindly "whatever impulse moved her, as if she had placed herself in alien hands for direction, and freed her soul of responsibility" (Ch. 12). Edna's path to integrity then is not a way deliberately chosen. Her ineffectual efforts and ultimate failure to think through her situation reiterate the irrational, emotional forces that have impelled her toward her destiny. (155)

C. INTERPRETATION BY PER SEYERSTED:

[Edna Pontellier's] suicide is entirely valid for her time, and she is, in a sense, defeated by her environment. Still, her decision means that, in the existential manner, she assumes sole responsibility for her life, and her suicide can be seen as a triumphant assertion of her inner liberty: it is the crowning glory of her development toward the clarity with which she comprehends her own nature—and the situation of women everywhere. (Chopin 16)

D. INTERPRETATION BY KATHLEEN MARGARET LANT:

> Finally, however, Edna realizes that there is one self she cannot refuse, for this self is a product of her physical being; the only way to renounce biology is to renounce the physical self. She has given up the dual life of secrecy, conformity, and lies, which concealed her questions and assertiveness. She has tossed off the garments of false selves; she has learned to swim, to master the waves and move away from the shore to freedom. . . . Her situation is hopeless. She has awakened because the feminine Adele has stirred her to explore her own feminine inner landscape. But tragically, again because Adele exposes her to the ultimate reality of feminity, Edna awakens to the horrible knowledge that she can never, because she is female, be her own person. (123-24)

E. INTERPRETATION BY SANDRA M. GILBERT:

> For, swimming away from the white beach of Grande Isle, from the empty summer colony and the equally empty fictions of marriage and maternity, Edna swims, as the novel's last sentences tell us, not into death but back into her own life, back into her own vision, back into the imaginative openness of her childhood. (104)

F. INTERPRETATION BY SUSAN J. ROSOWSKI:

> Edna's suicide represents her final attempt to escape—to escape her children, her lovers, and, most important, time and change. For only by complete isolation of self can Edna be truthful to her inner life. Any contact with external reality threatens this dream. (47)

Related Works

Novels

1. *Sister Carrie* (Theodore Drieser). A story of a young woman's coming of age and her corruption. Like Edna, Carrie is also in violation of "man's" arbitrary code of morals without shame or apology.
2. *Madame Bovary* (Gustave Flaubert). Critic Per Seyersted cites *The Awakening* as "a woman's reply to a man's *Madame Bovary*" (138) and points out that "both heroines have grown up on romanticism, with its exalted ideas of transcendent love; both become estranged from their husbands, neglect their children, have lovers, and take their own lives." However, while Madame Bovary wants to be different from what she is in reality, Pontellier wishes for clarity and understanding. (Chopin 15)
3. *The Scarlet Letter* (Nathaniel Hawthorne). A Romantic novel in which the main female character, a "malefactress" named Hester Prynne, is isolated by her own Puritan society because of her "sin."

4. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Zora Neale Hurston). A celebration of black cultural roots in which Hurston charts the evolution of Afro-American culture from subjugation through identification with whites, and finally, into autonomous racial identity and self-celebration. (Gilbert and Gubar, Introduction. "Hurston" 1683)

Poetry

5. "The Lady of Shalott" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson). A woman is kept in captivity because of her madness or her creativity. She chooses death over life because of her love for Lancelot.

6. "Wild Nights" (Emily Dickinson). The sensual water images in Dickinson's poem create an interesting comparison to images in Chopin's novel.

7. "In Duty Bound" (Charlotte Perkins Gilman). A poem about the restriction which binds women until "the soul inside/cries for a grave more wide."

Drama

8. *Hedda Gabler* (Henrik Ibsen). Ibsen creates a heroine who refuses to face life and is entrapped by her own instability and the irony of circumstance. Hedda's struggle provides a fascinating study in psychopathology.

9. *Antigone* (Sophocles). The tragedy of a woman whose struggle to bury her dead brother becomes a trial of divine law *versus* "man's" law. Her victory is revealed in her death.

Essay

10. *A Room of One's Own* (Virginia Woolf). An argument for the validity and necessity of women's writing.

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Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

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Overview

Critical Commentary. Frederick Douglass's autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,* is a text which is often taught in history classes but is also appropriate for study in English classes. Written just two decades before the Civil War, much of its content provides a forum for discussion of the issue of slavery and related issues which led to the split between the northern and southern states and ultimately to civil war. With its obvious historical value, why introduce this text into a literature course? The focus in some schools is an interdisciplinary approach in which social studies and English are presented side by side or intermingled. Because of the nature of his story, Douglass's text lends itself well to such an educational program. Moreover, questions arise immediately when examining the work in this light: Is this is a historical work or a piece of literature? What are the implications of labeling it as one or the other? Placed in an English classroom, the text can become somewhat distanced from its historical context and can be closely read without labeling it as just another Civil War story—without simply reducing it to another piece of the troubling historical puzzle.

The questions become more intriguing when one considers what Douglass has written. He has given his readers a "narrative"—the story of his life. But why does he use the term *narrative*? Why doesn't he call his work an autobiography? By using the former term, Douglass signals a narrativized history. What does this mean? Might his work also then be considered truthful literature? Are these terms oxymoronic? Think about what literature and history imply. When students read history, they are being presented with the "truth," that is, how events really occurred in the past. When students read literature, they are, for the most part, examining fiction. Douglass has blurred the boundaries between a historical and a literary text. Douglass's title is purposely made to sound mild: it is just a narrative, a story. However, Douglass's writing was more than just a literary event. His autobiography was a political act. His was a black voice shedding light on a white man's social and economic institution. High school history classes often present a single vision of the past that is more or less stable and unquestionably truthful. Douglass's text provides a way to show that history has multiple stories and meanings. In addition, with its multiple meanings, history can be viewed as a tapestry, a fabric woven of many voices. Unfortunately, though, for many years this tapestry has remained white. That is, the history taught in American classrooms has been woven with the threads of the white Anglo-Saxon male. The voice of history has seldom included blacks (or other ethnic or racial groups) or females; the white man has presented the Facts. In this historical context, Douglass's work should be recognized and celebrated as an authentic black thread in an otherwise light-colored history.

Secondly, Douglass's text is appropriate for an English classroom because it has not only made a political statement but also established a new genre, the slave narrative. As an important consequence, several other voices have been presented and heard through this type of writing. Language and structure therefore need to be considered. How does Douglass tell his story? How does he make it both powerful and readable? Is he merely presenting "the facts," or does meaning lie elsewhere?

Several critical approaches can lead students to ask pertinent questions and then to pursue answers regarding this text. Through New Criticism, historicism, new historicism, structuralism and reader response, students can consider style, content, language and structure in trying to discover what it is that Douglass has presented—history, propaganda, or literature. Students can work to understand that not only was Douglass careful in recounting major events in his life, but he selected only those which would make the greatest impact on an audience. Moreover, by including various opposing images and contradictions, Douglass challenges readers to find meaning in the juxtaposition of what has been explicitly stated in the text and another implicit or explicit image. Binary oppositions can be found throughout the novel. For example, as Douglass opens his work, he states the exact location of his birth, but he is unable to provide an accurate time or date.

> By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. (47)

A wealth of underlying meanings are contained in this passage. Motivation for learning, methods of oppression, the importance of knowledge, equating animals with slaves—all are revealed through opposing images. The teacher should lead students to identify the binary oppositions and then to discuss how they create meaning from those oppositions. Take the idea of birthdays and design a chart like the following:

slave-horse-animal-ignorance vs. master-human-knowledge

black children-deprived	vs.	white children-privileged
primitive	vs.	cultured
cyclical time	vs.	linear time
brutish	vs.	civilized

By simply discussing the age of slaves, Douglass is able to reveal how, in a subtle way, masters were able to control their slaves. By denying slaves a sense of linear time, preventing them access to a white man's way of knowing, the master was able to oppress his slaves. Moreover, Douglass reveals that by understanding the world through seasons, slaves were functioning and being treated like animals; they were pieces of property, like horses. This sense of not knowing was frustrating, humiliating, and oppressing and served as a motivating factor later in Douglass's life. Douglass realized that knowledge meant power and that if he could learn to read and write like the white man, then perhaps he could escape his oppression.

Thus, the focus on language becomes essential in examining Douglass's text. New Criticism strategies will help to reveal plays on words, ambiguities, ironies, and symbols of freedom. Structuralism will help students to discover the significance of binary oppositions. New historicism will help students to understand the importance of Douglass's voice in this Civil War period, and reader response will allow students to explore their own feelings about Douglass's life and about slavery.

A reader response journal can be helpful in organizing and reflecting on the many issues raised in this study. Perhaps students can divide a notebook into sections and keep a running list of questions as well. In the final analysis, students should realize all the implications of Douglass's narrative. He used his text to write about an old self, and in the process, created a new one: He went from slave to abolitionist. He created a new genre as well, that of the slave narrative. He established his voice in a society that had been dominated by the white middle-class male. He became a power to be reckoned with because he had knowledge; he had the ability to write, express himself, and share his experiences. He was both literary author and historian, a voice of victory in a monumental struggle against oppression.

Potential for Teaching. Douglass's *Narrative* can be used in either a history class or a literature class and may be related to other texts thematically or chronologically in an American studies course. Although appropriate for eleventh or twelfth grade students, the text is not in any way limited to these two levels. Douglass's text is just as approachable in middle school as it is in high school. Regardless of the grade level, a close reading is recommended in order to examine Douglass's purposes for writing and his content, language, and style.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. Although the average reader can comprehend most of Douglass's language, the teacher should assist unskilled readers with the more difficult vocabulary. Moreover, the content might very well be upsetting to some. Thus, a reader response journal is recommended so that students may keep track of troublesome vocabulary words, scenes, questions, and concerns with the book. Journal activity should not be just teacher-monitored, however. Journal partners might be assigned so that students can help each other and also share their perceptions of the text.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, the students will be able to. . .

Historical

1. recognize the work as a text published during the abolitionist movement
2. understand that Douglass became a primary spokes person for the crusade against slavery
3. discuss the effects the text might have had on an audience of that period
4. examine Douglass's purposes for writing this text and decide if they were personal, political, or both

New Historicism

5. understand that many voices create a historical story

6. understand that not all voices are heard nor are all stories told in history

7. understand that Douglass's text expanded the vision of slavery by including a black historian's perspective

8. see history as a fabric in which many stories have been woven together

New Criticism

9. examine the form and content and classify this genre as literature or history or both

10. explain how Douglass, through use of strong words and images, makes this a persuasive piece of writing

11. identify words, phrases, and images that make Douglass's life appear to be a universal "slave story"

Structuralism

12. locate binary oppositions in the text and discuss how they create a picture of Douglass's life as a slave

13. locate recurring words and phrases and construct meanings from patterns or repetitions

Reader Response

14. explore personal feelings about slavery before and after reading the text

15. identify images or scenes that affect them

Prereading Activities

Prereading Activities to Introduce the Book

1. If the class is to consider whether or not the book can be classified more as a literary work or as an historical work, the first activity should be to characterize both categories, literature and history. Then the students should try to place the text. To begin, the teacher should brainstorm with the students what they expect from a piece of literature and what they expect from a historical document. Make a list of the characteristics of each. Definitions for these terms may be established: *fact, fiction, nonfiction, autobiography, narrative*. Consider the language that students might find in each (connotative, denotative, figurative language). Also compare the motives and purposes of an historian and a literary writer.
2. Help students to compare a history textbook with a literature anthology. Again, compile a list of characteristics of each and arrange the information on a graphic organizer. This time, emphasize similarities as well as differences. Finally, take a selection from a history book and a short story from an anthology. Compare organization, language, and content. Look back to the students' original list from Prereading #1 and make comparisons. For example, if Stephen Crane's

"A Mystery of Heroism" and a selection from the Civil War period are used, examine the portrayal of *hero* in both. Similarly consider the treatment of the ideas *slave, freedom, citizen*.

3. Ask individuals or groups to investigate the abolitionist movement and to present a short paper covering some aspect of it, e.g., the people who spoke out against slavery or the underground railroad. Some students might look for more literature written by slaves. The class might compile a bibliography of *literature* about slavery (personal narratives, poems, stories).
4. Ask students to respond in their journals to this quotation from Douglass's *Narrative*: "A still tongue makes a wise head" (62). Ask them to predict how this might apply to Douglass's life and how it might apply to their own.
5. Have students write an additional journal entry in which they assess their personal feelings about slavery.
6. Have students write a brief description of their first few years of life. Include day and date of birth, time and location, and anything else of interest. Share responses. Then have students consider how and why they selected the events. What made them include certain details and omit others?

The text is short enough to allow the students to read the entire book within a few days. If possible, complete the book before beginning any postreading exercises. If the schedule does not permit this, discuss the text by sections (of which there are three: Section I, Chapters 1-4; Section II, Chapters 5-9; and Section III, Chapters 10-11). These divisions emphasize significant changes in Douglass's life and character.

Prereading Activities for Each Section

1. Ask the students to predict, in their journals, some of the events in the *Narrative.* What are they expecting to find? What will Douglass talk about? What are some of the issues he will address? Through class discussions or group work, share these predictions.
2. Have students make a list of questions that they would like to ask Douglass and/or the text. Save the questions for the postreading activities. Students might work well with partners on this activity and compile their questions in their journals.

Guide for Reading

The activities on the Guide for Reading which follows this unit can be used after reading each section or after the students have completed the entire book. The activities correspond to the Suggested Instructional Objectives which emphasize Douglass's use of language, his motives for writing, and the classification of the text.

Postreading Activities for Each Section

1. After reading the first section, ask the students to compare Douglass's description of his early life to the ones the students wrote. Discuss how and why Douglass might have selected his details.
2. Identify binary oppositions and discuss how these tensions add to the meaning of the work.
3. Ask students to select the most powerful passage in each section and respond to it in a journal entry. Ask them to include why they chose the passage, how it made them feel, and why they think Douglass included it in his *Narrative*.
4. Return to the predictions and compare what the students expected to what was presented in the book.
5. Ask the students to look at their initial set of questions. Were any of them answered? After reading, do they have more to add? This activity works well with partners or small groups.
6. Ask students to keep a running list of images that appear within each section. Then compare the images from one section to another. Are there any predominant ones in each section? Compare the image to the events in Douglass's life. How are actions and images related? How do the words complement or contradict what is happening in his life?

Postreading Activities for the Entire Book

1. Ask students to review all of their questions and to select some that remain unanswered to use for the basis of class discussion. Use them to bring closure to the class's study of the book.
2. Ask students to reread all of their journal entries related to this book. Then, in a paper, have them summarize their impressions of the book and comment on any areas that they found to be troublesome.
3. Assign a panel to consider the following questions and to discuss how to classify Douglass's book.
    - A. Is Douglass's book purely factual? Does it read like a story?
    - B. Based on the lists of characteristics that we developed, where does Douglass's book fall?
    - C. Should an autobiography be used to help clarify history or just be used as an interesting story?
    - D. Can an autobiography be considered an accurate piece of history? Why or why not?
    - E. Was Douglass trying to paint an accurate picture, or did he write the book for some other reason? Do you consider this a piece of protest literature or a means of therapy or both?
    - F. Do your answers to Question E change your impression of the book?

Evaluation

In addition to providing quizzes on the content, the teacher may wish to consider the following evaluation activities:

1. Have students respond to one or more of the following essay questions:
    A. Trace Douglass's development from a young slave to an active abolitionist, citing events that encouraged him to escape to the North or contributed to his escape.
    B. Explain how knowledge meant power for Douglass.
    C. Explain why a narrative was the best way for Douglass to protest slavery. Comment on how Douglass's choice of words and events strengthened his message.
    D. In your opinion, was Douglass recording history or creating a new type of literature, the slave narrative? Do you think Douglass's experiences were best presented this way? What if he had written poetry or songs instead?
2. Have students research Douglass's life in other sources and write a report on his activities later in life.

Related Works

1. "George Washington Carver" (George Washington Carver). An excerpt of Carver's biography found in *Adventures for Readers, Book Two*

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). Carver might make a nice subject for comparison because he was also born a slave, in Missouri in 1864.

2. *The Red Badge of Courage* (Stephen Crane). The reader experiences the Civil War from the perspective of a young white soldier.
3. *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Frederick Douglass). This longer work contains the same information as *Narrative* and more. Douglass's third and final autobiographical text is *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass.*
4. *Across Five Aprils* (Irene Hunt). A family from Illinois is thrown into turmoil when one son decides to fight for the South during the Civil War while the other sons fight for the North.
5. *Confessions of a Slave* (Nat Turner). This is Nat Turner's speech delivered at his trial on November 5, 1831.
6. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain). A classic American novel that explores the relationship between a young white boy and his companion, a runaway slave.
7. *Up From Slavery* (Booker T. Washington). This is another classic slave narrative.
8. *The Color Purple* (Alice Walker). The story of a young woman who experiences both oppression and prejudice in the society in which she lives.

9. *Glory* (the motion picture). The story of a black regiment's attempt to join the fighting in the Civil War.

10. "A Hero's Story." This selection (in *Art and Man*, December 1989) is about Horace Pippin's paintings of John Brown. Both men would be interesting subjects for a study of methods of protest which compare to Douglass's work.

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Guide for Reading

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

I. THE POWER OF WORDS

A. Copy from the text descriptions of the following people. (Be sure to use Douglass's words.) Note especially words and phrases used more than twice.

PERSON	DESCRIPTIONS
Colonel Lloyd	
Captain Anthony	
Mr. Plummer	
Mr. Severe	

PERSON	DESCRIPTIONS
Mr. Hopkins	
Mr. Gore	
Mr. Hugh Auld	
Mrs. Auld	
Mr. Thomas Auld	

PERSON	DESCRIPTIONS
Mr. Covey	

B. Write a brief general impression of Douglass's overall relationship with his masters.

II. BINARY OPPOSITIONS

A. Go back through Chapters 1–4 and look for words that state or imply their opposites in the same description. Try to create associations that would reveal a meaning in the text.

Examples:

master	slave
white	black
linear time	seasonal/cyclical time
verbal	mute
knowledgeable	ignorant

B. What conclusions can you draw about Douglass's early life?

C. Now do the same for Chapters 5–9 and then 10–11.

D. Compare the list and look for changes in associations. How does the language or the images change as the events in Douglass's life change?

III. COMPARISONS/CONTRASTS

A. Go through Chapters 1–4 and make a list of descriptions of Douglass's life as a young boy. Pay particular attention to the details about life in the country. Then go through Chapters 5–9 and list descriptions of his city life. Draw conclusions about what each meant to Douglass.

COUNTRY LIFE	**CITY LIFE**

B. How did *you* react to his descriptions?

IV. A SPOKESPERSON FOR LIFE AND FREEDOM

A. With the publication of his *Narrative*, Frederick Douglass became a primary spokesperson for the emancipation of slaves. However, he was not always so outspoken. Go through the text and see if you can trace his progression from being a "mute" slave to becoming an outspoken freedman. Find at least one quotation from each chapter.

CHAPTER	**QUOTATION(S)**
1	
2	
3	
4	

CHAPTER	QUOTATION(S)
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

CHAPTER	QUOTATION(S)
11	

B. Explain how Douglass was able to overcome terrible odds to become a prolific writer.

V. IMAGES OF POWER

A. Make a list of "power relations." You are looking for kinds of power and ways in which the masters maintained their power versus the ways in which Douglass gathered and used power. Start at the beginning of the book and work through each chapter.

MASTERS	**DOUGLASS**
1. power over slaves through food rations, beatings	1. control over his emotions and responses to his master
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

MASTERS	DOUGLASS
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.

MASTERS	DOUGLASS
10.	10.
11.	11.

B. What becomes the best weapon for Douglass? What "power" does he use to become free?

The Scarlet Letter

Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Overview

Critical Commentary. Just as Hester Prynne embellished the scarlet letter marking her difference from other seventeenth century Boston Puritans, so Nathaniel Hawthorne wove into the fabric of his own *The Scarlet Letter* a richness lending itself to numerous critical approaches. Each approach highlights a different pattern of the intricate designs which combine to make this novel a classic that kindles the flame of self-recognition within the human soul.

New Critical Approach. Hawthorne treats the themes of sin, guilt, and atonement with an irony and ambiguity suggesting the temperament of the modern age. The novel is rich in tension between images of light and dark, physical and spiritual, imagined and real or pretended and real, nature and civilization, thought and action, heaven and hell. Names—Chillingworth, Dimmesdale, Pearl, and Hester—suggest the qualities of those to whom they belong. For instance, Hester's intellectual and emotional strength, like that of her Biblical forebear, Esther, is juxtaposed to the effeminate weakness of her lover. Hester's warmth and spontaneity draw their opposites—the aloofness of the calculating Chillingworth, the resentment of the secretly sinful Puritans. In addition, Hawthorne's initial mood of gloom is highlighted by an ironically placed symbol of hope, the rose, and its association to the rebellious Anne Hutchinson.

Throughout the novel, the romantic mood is undercut by the author's ironic tone so that after Hester and Dimmesdale's meeting in the forest, the reader is hardly surprised by Dimmesdale's unusual behavior during his return home. Nor is the reader shocked by events in the final chapters.

Neo-Aristotelian. Hawthorne's carefully wrought plot is best analyzed by tracing the overall effect that an unguarded moment of passion has on the lives of four individuals. As the novel opens, Hester Prynne, with her three-month-old daughter, Pearl, emerges from the prison to spend her time in public disgrace on the scaffold in Boston's square. At this point, her husband, whom she has not seen for three years, appears. Observing his wife in disgrace, he refuses to acknowledge his kinship to her. Rather, he assumes the identity of Roger Chillingworth, physician. From Hester he exacts a promise of silence about their relationship.

On Hester's silence hinges Chillingworth's plan to discover and to take revenge on the man who had cuckolded him. One aspect of the storyline follows Chillingworth's gradual spiritual corruption. After surmising that a Puritan minister, Arthur Dimmesdale, had been Hester's lover, the physician moves into the minister's home on the pretext of ministering to the younger man's physical welfare. By the end of the story, Chillingworth, once a good, gentle man, has become evil incarnate.

Another thread of the story develops the effects of Dimmesdale's publicly unacknowledged guilt on his physical well-being and on his moral character. This guilt serves as a focal point for the moral hypocrisy that pervades all aspects of the Puritan way of life. Though Dimmesdale finally does publicly confess his relationship to Hester and Pearl, his motives are misconstrued by Puritan leaders and are misinterpreted by the citizenry.

A third aspect of the plot illuminates Hester's lonely spiritual battle to atone for her sin and to transcend what she perceives as the flawed Puritan vision of the world. Her generosity and willingness to aid those in need gradually transpose the stigma of the "A" she wears to signify "Able" rather than "Adultery." Once she fully realizes Chillingworth's treachery, she warns Dimmesdale, and, in one of the most poignant love scenes in American literature, offers to flee to Europe with him and to live as his wife.

Pearl, "purchased at great price," is the catalyst giving unity to the three separate stories. Pearl embodies the sin of Hester and Dimmesdale; her very presence and her candid questions prod Hester and Dimmesdale to reflect upon their sins and to take action to atone for them. As the physical embodiment of Hester's betrayal of him, Pearl spurs Chillingworth's revenge. Yet, in the end, it is Pearl who empowers Dimmesdale to escape the revenge of Chillingworth and thus releases Chillingworth from the grip of the evil that has consumed him.

In tracing the effect of sin on the lives of the four major characters, traditional moralists will view Hester's affair as truly sinful and its aftermath as tragic. To the traditionalist, Hester's punishment is deserved, her lack of salvation logical. On the other hand, the romantic critic does not interpret Hester's indiscretion as sinful. Rather, it represents her repudiation of the dead forms of tradition (society's harsh restraints upon the natural instincts of humans). However, society, the embodiment of the evil she renounces, punishes her. Transcendentalist critics mediate between the traditional and the romantic view. Transcendentalists interpret Hester's sin as putting romantic love ahead of ideal truth. Her failure to reveal the truth from the beginning marred her integrity. By attempting to protect her lover, she instead deceived him and precipitated his moral degeneration (Carpenter 8-13).

Psychological Approach. Countless psychological principles are revealed by the characters of the novel, most notably, principles attributed to Sigmund Freud. Hester becomes a focal point for the Puritan community's own sinfulness through the psychological mechanism of transfer or projection.

Chillingworth, obsessed with revenge, embodies the individual whose id has gained control of his action. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, is one whose superego takes control, dries up his energy, and eventually drains him of all life. Hester's fine handiwork represents her sublimated libidinal energy. In Pearl, one sees evidence of Jean Piaget's stages of human development.

Some psychological critics view the writing of the novel as the author's way of compensating for loss or of working out his own psychological problems. T. Walter Herbert, Jr., calls attention to Hawthorne's uncertainty about his sexual identity. Painfully shy, Hawthorne failed to exhibit the masterful manhood which was a prevailing standard of his times. Instead, his writing—and according to Longfellow, his conversation—was marked by great "emotion, subtly responsive to inward experience" (Herbert 285). Dimmesdale typifies many of the qualities characterizing Hawthorne, and Pearl's character is closely modeled on that of Hawthorne's firstborn, an aggressive female child who threatened Hawthorne's self-concept (Herbert 285-97). Joanne Feit Diehl, however, views *The Scarlet Letter* as Hawthorne's attempt to work out, through the act of writing, his Oedipal desire to possess his mother (655-73).

Archetypal Approach. Hester is generally viewed as an image of the Great Mother, the *anima* to whom both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale are drawn. Initially, she seems a passive recipient of what fate has to offer as she is initiated first into the reality of married life and then into sinfulness.

However, as the plot develops, the reader determines an inner resourcefulness that turns others to her in time of need. In this respect, she becomes the Good Mother. Other critics view her as Eve, the temptress who lures good men—Chillingworth and Dimmesdale—to paths of evil. Chillingworth fits the pattern of the Shadow, the figure of deception who leads men and women to tragedy. By attempting to veil his innate sinfulness, Dimmesdale represents Everyman, who must in the end face God and the world in his confession of sin. Pearl, in this interpretation, becomes the child who embarks on a quest. Her quest is one for maturity, which she achieves when she is able to overcome her own self-centeredness and to extend Dimmesdale her human sympathy.

Feminist Approach. Feminist critics are often disturbed by the discrepancies in Hawthorne's portrait of Hester. They view her as representative of the woman whose independence and creativity threatens male dominance. Accordingly, Hester was ostracized. Feminists point out how Hawthorne, who seems to sympathize with Hester for much of the novel, turns his back on her and denies her leadership of her gender in the book's final pages. Even Pearl, who resists efforts to be molded into a traditional "angel in the house" image typical in Victorian thought, ends up as muted as a princess in a fairy tale.

Another aspect of feminist criticism identifies *The Scarlet Letter* as a novel that challenges established truth of the status quo by the process of inversion. The novel, according to Viola Sachs, contains two scripts. One is a surface script representing the conventional world of order, law, authority, and God the Father. The other is a hidden text composed of the varying textures, shapes, and colors that represent Mother Nature and all the darkness, wildness, and disorder she embodies. Hawthorne's purpose, says Sachs, is to find an artistic, linguistic expression that will be truly American in its boldness (139-51).

Potential for Teaching. Henry James wrote in his monograph on Hawthorne in the series, "English Men of Letters":

> . . . the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* was in the United States a literary event of the first importance. The book was the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country. There was a consciousness of this in the welcome that was given it—a satisfaction in the idea of America having produced a novel that belonged to literature, and to the forefront of it. (108)

Since James wrote of it, *The Scarlet Letter* has indeed earned the title of classic. Throughout the twentieth century, it has been required or recommended reading, especially for those secondary students studying American literature. In fact, in an *English Journal* poll (Judy and Judy), *The Scarlet Letter* was among the literary favorites of English teachers, and Nathaniel Hawthorne was among the authors they most preferred to teach.

Perhaps a significant reason for the novel's popularity is its wide base of appeal. The setting, seventeenth century Boston, offers teachers a tool for broadening student understanding of Puritan culture and its influence on modern American culture. In this capacity, *The Scarlet Letter* may be used as enrichment reading or for class study during a unit on colonial American literature.

The romantic conflict that exists between Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth captures the interest of many students, primarily because by ages sixteen through eighteen most of them have begun to think, at least tentatively, of marriage and the ramifications of choosing a mate. Hester's predicament arouses their sympathy while Chillingworth's behavior, though considered old-fashioned in our own ideally "liberated" society, spurs students to question how the male ego responds to what it perceives as betrayal.

Teachers and students interested in motivation for the creative process will find suitable material relating to the ideas and feelings that prompted Hawthorne to write this novel. Furthermore, the novel lends itself to library research on historical information relating to its story.

Study of Hawthorne's technique provides the teacher great scope for introducing or for reinforcing reading skills, including literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, synthesis of ideas, and evaluation of character, plot development, and style. The story itself unfolds in a fairly straightforward manner, yet Hawthorne develops it by using emotionally charged language filled with figures of speech, symbolism, and irony.

In addition, the novel is an excellent source for vocabulary study or for reinforcement of vocabulary skills. Finally, the novel is difficult enough to require teacher-directed reading for fullest understanding and appreciation.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. The novel is suitable for study in grades nine through twelve. However, the more intellectually and emotionally mature students in the eleventh and twelfth grades may have less difficulty perceiving and identifying with the complex human emotions that generate the action of the novel.

Because of the slow-paced, suggestive rather than explicit style which Hawthorne uses, most high school students have difficulty maintaining interest during the initial pages of the novel, especially "The Custom-House" essay. Vocabulary may also create a problem for some readers, sometimes because words and their contexts are unfamiliar, sometimes because students do not fully comprehend the concept behind a word.

Because of the specific historical context in which the action of the novel occurs, understanding Puritan morality and practices, the theocracy of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the European roots of the Puritans (including references to models for Governor Bellingham's mansion [Chapter 7] and the New England Holiday [Chapter 22], reasons for marriage, and academic preparation for physicians and for Puritan clergymen) deepens the reader's perception of character, plot, and theme. Identification of historical persons (Anne Hutchinson [Chapter 1] and Governor Winthrop [Chapter 12]) and clarification of concepts such as the Black Man or of practices such as witchcraft would aid readers in interpreting the novel.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying *The Scarlet Letter*, students will be able to . . .

New Criticism

1. demonstrate an understanding of how choice of language creates mood and tone in a literary selection
2. draw conclusions about the theme and support these conclusions by examining various images (e.g., the letter "A," the color red, light/dark, the woods, Pearl, the maze, the scaffold) and historical references
3. explain the significance of names used for major characters
4. explain how mood and tone aid in establishing theme
5. explain how description of setting contributes to the development of theme

6. explain how language determines that the novel is considered romantic rather than realistic or naturalistic

Neo-Aristotelian

7. analyze the effect of Hawthorne's structure of events by examining:
    a. public response to Dimmesdale as opposed to his own disintegrating morality and final act of attrition
    b. Chillingworth's gradual development as a demonic figure
    c. Hester's development to heroic stature
    d. Pearl's role as facilitator of other characters' actions
8. explain how references to historical figures and to supernatural events contribute to the overall effect of the novel
9. explain how the traditional moralist, the romantic, and the transcendentalist would view the effect of events in this novel

Psychological

10. apply Jean Piaget's principles of child development to the character of Pearl to determine to what extent her behavior is that of a normal child
11. explain what psychological phenomenon Puritanism represents and relate this phenomenon to the inner conflicts that create character in this novel

12. explain how Hester serves as a scapegoat for the Puritan community
13. explain Chillingworth's psychological response to the affair of Hester and Dimmesdale
14. explain how the creation of the novel may have represented for Hawthorne an act of compensation
15. explain how creation of the novel may have enabled Hawthorne to work out his Oedipal conflict
16. explain how Hester's handiwork represents her sublimated libidinal energy

Archetypal

17. explain how Dimmesdale represents Everyman
18. explain how Pearl is a child on a quest
19. explain how Hester typifies the Good Mother archetype
20. explain how Hester typifies the Eve figure
21. explain how Chillingworth represents the Shadow figure

Feminist

22. show contradictions in Hawthorne's presentation of Hester
23. explain the Victorian "angel in the house" concept and show how Pearl finally fits that mold
24. evaluate Hester's success as a single parent

25. evaluate Hester as a hero in a society inimical to her

26. show how Hawthorne disrupts the status quo to create an American linguistic expression

Other

27. demonstrate basic understanding of the elements of fiction: plot, setting, character, conflict, theme, style (concrete and figurative language, irony, symbolism, point of view, tone, mood, and structure of plot and parts of that plot)

28. use library skills to research various topics; use organizational skills in preparing presentations; use speaking skills in conveying information to class

29. use selected vocabulary from novel in contextual configurations, in analogies, in antonym or synonym configurations, and in their writing and speaking

Prereading Activities

1. Initiate a discussion in which students explain elements of fiction and generate examples to illustrate each. Terms may first be given as a written assignment for individual or group work, but they should eventually be discussed by the entire class.

2. To teach or to reinforce the concept of how the nuances of language that create mood and tone in literature contribute to the meaning or

theme of a work, give students a short selection such as T. S. Eliot's "Morning at Window," Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Aaron Stark," or Ezra Pound's "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter." Then pose the following questions to which students respond, first in writing and then in class discussion:

    A. What are your feelings as you finish reading this poem?
    B. Circle words and phrases that help to give you that feeling.
    C. What kind of attitude does the author seem to have toward his subject matter?
    D. What words and phrases seem to support such an attitude?
    E. What do these elements suggest about theme?

Successful completion of this activity should help to prepare students to identify factors contributing to mood, tone, and theme in *The Scarlet Letter*.

3. As a follow-up to the previous activity or in place of it, have students develop a short narrative description or poem in which they attempt to establish a specific mood and tone that suggests an idea or theme. The activity should be done step-by-step:

A. Choose the emotion to be conveyed.

B. Choose adjectives to describe and convey this emotion.

C. Choose verbs to describe and convey the action associated with the emotion.

D. Devise two figures of speech to convey the emotion.

E. Identify sounds of the alphabet that best call attention to the emotion. Do your adjectives, verbs, and images use these sounds?

F. Write. After writing has been completed, students should examine each other's work to determine the prevailing mood and tone. Several effective selections should be shared with the entire class.

4. Have students read the first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Prison Door," and describe a first impression or feeling they get from reading it. Then direct them to examine, describe, and discuss the following elements of the chapter:

A. setting

B. the effect of Hawthorne's choice of the following words and phrases: "sad colored garments," "steeple-crowned hats," "hoods," "heavily timbered oaks studded with iron spikes," "cemetery next to the prison," "darker aspect," "beetle-browed," "rust," "rosebush and rose," "darkening close . . . human frailty and sorrow"

   C. implied conflict
   D. mood
   E. tone
   F. characters and their lifestyles
   G. predictions about theme

5. The following topics may be used for library research and oral presentations:
   A. Puritan lifestyle, practices, beliefs
   B. Anne Hutchinson's beliefs and her conflict with the Puritans (Chapter 1)
   C. Governor Winthrop (Chapter 12)
   D. medical training and practice in the seventeenth century (Chapter 4)
   E. training of Puritan clergymen (Chapter 3)
   F. The concept of the Black Man and witchcraft in the seventeenth century in New England
   G. the New England Holiday (marking the new governor's inauguration) and the election sermon (Chapter 22)

Presentation may be delayed until the topic can be coordinated with daily reading assignments.

6. Give students a list of vocabulary words from the text. The list should be composed of words that are challenging, difficult to understand in the context of the novel, or representative of an idea related to the theme or the development of character, or words that might appear on a test like the Scholastic Aptitude Test. A few examples are *penance, scourge, ignominy, annals, maze, theocracy, ponderous, parochial.* Before reading begins, several strategies may be used to familiarize students with word meanings, derivative forms, pronunciation, synonyms, antonyms, contextual clues to meaning, and analogous meanings. These include word mapping, worksheets, or computer programs that emphasize these skills. Teacher use of target words in lectures and discussions or student use in written or oral work will also help to reinforce learning.

7. Several topics for writing and discussion may also generate interest in the novel:

    A. What kind of behavior does a person expect from his or her mate? How does that person respond when the mate fails to behave in the expected fashion?

B. What is morality? Who decides what it is? What is moral courage? How does one achieve it?

Guide for Reading

The Guide for Reading which appears at the end of this unit is ready for copying and distributing to students. It is divided into seven parts. Each part develops insight about a particular character or that character's relationships to others. These characters are named at the beginning of each part. Questions should cue students about what to look for while reading. Questions should not be used for required pencil and paper responses after each reading; rather, they should serve as guides for check quizzes on each reading assignment, as a basis for postreading class discussion, and as a building block for discussion of the entire novel.

Postreading Activities

1. Postreading quizzes with questions based on those in the Guide for Reading will determine literal comprehension of events, settings, conflicts, and images used in the novel.
2. The following topics can be used for class discussion, small group discussion with class presentation of ideas discussed, panel discussion, cross-fire debate, essays or essay tests. Topics have been organized according to the critical approaches which they reflect (New Criticism,

A-B; neo-Aristotelian, C-I; psychoanalytic, J-O; archetypal, P-S; feminist, T-Y):

A. how images, historical references, character names and descriptions, and setting aid in establishing theme

B. how use of language determines that the novel is romantic rather than realistic or naturalistic even though the tone is ironic and the style is often ambiguous

C. how references to historical figures and supernatural events contribute to the overall effect of the novel

D. development of public responses to Dimmesdale as opposed to his own disintegrating morality and final act of attrition

E. how Hawthorne gradually develops Chillingworth into a demonic figure

F. how Hawthorne develops Hester's heroic stature

G. Pearl as a facilitator of action and effect

H. (after teacher's lecture on the ways in which traditional moralists, romantics, and transcendentalists view the world) explanation of how each one would view characters and events in *The Scarlet Letter*

I. (after teacher's lecture on Jean Piaget's principles of cognitive development) determining whether Pearl fits the mold of a normal child

J. (after teacher's lecture on the psychological phenomenon of repression) explanation of the extent to which Puritanism fits this phenomenon and how Puritanism creates inner conflicts causing character motivation in the novel

K. (after teacher's lecture on Freud's concepts of the id, the ego, and the superego) explanation of how Chillingworth embodies the id; Dimmesdale, the superego .

L. (after teacher's lecture on the psychological principle of sublimation) explanation of how Hester's needlework was a result of her sublimated libidinal energy

M. (after teacher's lecture on psychological principle of projection) discussion of how Hester becomes a scapegoat for Boston society's projected sinfulness

N. (after reading the introductory essay, "The Custom-House," and after gathering background information on Hawthorne's personality and his family's relationships prior to his birth) explanation of how creation of the novel becomes an act of compensation for Hawthorne

O. (after teacher's lecture on views of Joanne Feit Diehl) explanation of how *The Scarlet Letter* represents Hawthorne's working out of his Oedipal conflict

P. (after teacher's lecture on the Great Mother archetype) discussion about whether Hester fits the Good Mother or the Eve figure aspect of this archetype

Q. (after teacher's lecture on the Shadow archetype) explanation of how Chillingworth embodies this image

R. (after teacher's lecture about Adam as an Everyman archetype) discussion of whether Dimmesdale fits this type

S. (after teacher's lecture on the quest archetype) discussion of Pearl as the child who pursues maturity

T. evaluation of Hester as a forerunner to modern feminist ideals

U. citation of contradictions of Hawthorne's presentation of Hester

V. evaluation of Hester as a single parent

W. (after teacher's lecture about Victorian concepts of the female as a "monster" or as an "angel in the house") tracing the development of Pearl from the "monster" images of the first pages to the muted "angel in the house" images of the final pages

X. explanation of how Hawthorne's writing style disrupts literary tradition's status quo and thus becomes a voice of the new world

Y. evaluation of Hester as a hero in a society inimical to her

The following activities reflect a synthesis of various critical approaches. These activities may be used to stimulate a creative synthesis of ideas and techniques studied in connection with *The Scarlet Letter*.

3. Students with artistic talent may prepare original artwork in ink, charcoal, oil, acrylic, or watercolor to illustrate
    - A. mood or conflict as depicted in a major scene in the novel
    - B. Chillingworth as a Shadow image
    - C. Hester as the Great Mother image
4. Students who enjoy creative writing might choose to compose
    - A. a short story set in modern times that depicts a conflict similar to that of the novel and includes several images that build toward a theme
    - B. a eulogy reflecting Puritan values to be delivered at Hester's funeral
    - C. a dramatic monologue, in poetic form, in which one of the major characters in the novel explains his or her reaction to the confession and death of Dimmesdale

    D. a journal written from the perspective of the youngest of the women in the marketplace chapter (Entries should reflect her attitude toward Hester as opposed to those of at least two of the other women in the marketplace. The journal should span the time frame of the story and perhaps begin before the story opens and end with Hester's death.)

5. Musicians may develop and perform a ballad emphasizing the relationship of Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth.
6. Those interested in needlework might choose to
    A. embroider an "A" which might have been produced by Hester
    B. dress a doll as Hester would dress Pearl

Evaluation

Students' success in fulfilling instructional objectives can be determined in part by the following evaluative activities:

1. a summative vocabulary test requiring response at the inference level
2. formative objective quizzes after each reading assignment (quizzes based on questions from the Guide for Reading)
3. class participation (including group work, presentations, reports, panel discussions, cross-fires, or class discussions) evaluated on the basis of willingness to participate and quality of insights shared with class

4. summative essay test based on questions in the Guide for Reading and on Postreading #2
5. essays on topics from Postreading #2
6. creative productions from Postreading #3-#6

Related Works

Students who enjoyed *The Scarlet Letter* may also enjoy reading other works that present characters living in the Puritan era.

1. *The Devil's Shadow* (Clifford L. Alderman). The story revolves around the Paris family's involvement in events precipitating the Salem witchcraft trials.
2. "Endicott and the Red Cross" (Nathaniel Hawthorne). Published before *The Scarlet Letter,* this short story contains the basic storyline for the novel.
3. "Young Goodman Brown" (Nathaniel Hawthorne). This short story depicts a man's bargain with the devil and its effect on his life.
4. *The Crucible* (Arthur Miller). In this play Miller examines human conflict of interest as a cause for defaming other people. Written about the Salem, Massachusetts, witchcraft hysteria, this drama explores human weaknesses like those which led to the Communist purges of the 1950's.

5. *Elizabeth* (Willo D. Roberts). A teenage girl's good sense and moral courage keep the witchcraft hysteria from paralyzing and destroying her family, her friend, and her community.

6. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* (Elizabeth George Speare). When Kit Tyler comes from Barbados to live with her Puritan relatives in colonial Connecticut, she is not prepared to accept the austere life of hard work—or to stand trial as a witch.

Students may also enjoy reading a novel that influenced Hawthorne's writing of *The Scarlet Letter* and three novels influenced by *The Scarlet Letter.*

7. *La Novelle Héloïse* (Jean-Jacques Rousseau). Rousseau questions the return to nature in relation to the sexes and the family in this novel which Hawthorne read at sixteen, even though he had been forbidden to do so. Like *The Scarlet Letter,* Rousseau's novel presents a three-character triangle brought about by strange circumstances.

8. *A Month of Sundays* (John Updike). This is the Dimmesdale version of Updike's trilogy, a modern retelling of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter.* Tom Marshfield, a weak-willed Protestant minister, struggles to overcome his lust and to rejuvenate his faltering faith.

9. *Roger's Version* (John Updike). In this second novel of his trilogy, Updike repeats the love triangle that generates the plot of *The Scarlet*

Letter. His villain, Lambert, is married to Esther, who succumbs to the attentions of Dale, the "born again" Christian.

10. *S* (John Updike). The final novel of the trilogy is the farcical Hester Prynne version. It depicts forty-two-year-old Sarah Worth, who drops out of her boring, upper-class Boston lifestyle to get back in touch with herself at an Arizona ashram.

Finally, students, might enjoy a thematically-related novel.

11. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (Thomas Hardy). The seduction and rape of an innocent workingclass girl poses marital problems for the girl when her Puritanical husband discovers the truth.

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Guide for Reading

The Scarlet Letter

As you read *The Scarlet Letter*, look for details to help you answer the following questions so that you can take an active part in postreading discussion or perform well on daily quizzes. The information in parentheses calls attention to the character or characters who receive emphasis in these chapters.

Chapters 2-5 (Hester)

1. What attitudes do the women express about Hester? Can you suggest reasons for these attitudes?
2. What does Hester wear on her chest? Describe it. How does it compare with her clothes?
3. How is Hester's physical and mental make-up described?
4. What reasons might Hawthorne have had for comparing and contrasting Hester to the Virgin Mary?
5. Of what does Hester think as she stands on the platform? Why does she think these things? What do you learn of her childhood marriage?
6. Describe the two men introduced in Chapter 3. What response does each have to Hester's plight?
7. Who speaks to Hester from the crowd?

8. What kind of reaction does Pearl have as a result of her mother's experience? How do Pearl and Hester respond to the physician?

9. What promise does the physician obtain from Hester? What does he vow to do?

10. What is Lethe? Nepenthe? Why are they mentioned?

11. Why does Hester remain in Boston after her release from prison? Where does she live?

12. What evidence does Chapter 5 present that cues the reader to the double standard held by Puritan citizens? What feeling does Hester have about this attitude?

Chapters 6-8 (Pearl)

1. Why is Pearl so named?

2. Describe Pearl physically and emotionally. What traits has she inherited from Hester?

3. What is the first thing Pearl notices about Hester?

4. From whose point-of-view is this chapter developed? What are some reasons for this approach?

5. How does Hester dress Pearl? Think of several possible explanations for dressing the child in this fashion.

6. What do we learn about Governor Bellingham from the description of his mansion, his previous career training, his appearance? How

do he and Reverend Wilson feel about luxury? How would you rate their credibility as Puritan leaders? Why?

7. How do you view Pearl's behavior towards Reverend Wilson and Governor Bellingham? How does each of the other characters respond to her behavior?

8. Cite two reasons for Hester's trip to Bellingham's house.

9. How has Chillingworth changed?

10. What right does Hester believe she has to keep Pearl? How does Dimmesdale respond to her plea? How does Hester's exchange with Mistress Hibbins later in the chapter verify what Hester has told Bellingham?

11. Why does Pearl show preference to Dimmesdale?

Chapters 9-11 (Chillingworth and Dimmesdale)

1. What are common elements in the backgrounds of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale? Does common background alone draw them together? If not, what else draws them close and eventually spurs Chillingworth to move in with the minister?

2. Why do few doctors come to Massachusetts Bay Colony?

3. Why is "The Leech" an appropriate title for Chapter 9?

4. What contrast in Chillingworth's character does Chapter 10 present?

5. How does Chillingworth's story about the flabby leafed plant precipitate the action of Chapter 10?
6. How does Dimmesdale explain an individual's choice not to confess sin while still alive? How does Chillingworth respond to this view?
7. What views do Chillingworth and Dimmesdale express about Pearl?
8. What does Pearl sense about Chillingworth?
9. Over what do the two men disagree? How does this scene motivate Chillingworth's action at the end of Chapter 10? To whom or what is Chillingworth compared at this point?
10. What picture does Hawthorne paint of Dimmesdale's emotional state in Chapter 11? What are causes of Dimmesdale's problem?

Chapter 12 (Dimmesdale, Hester, Pearl)

1. How much time has passed since the first scaffold scene?
2. What evidence does this chapter provide of Dimmesdale's hypocrisy? Out of what does his hypocrisy grow?
3. How is Mistress Hibbins implicated in the actions of this scene?
4. What event brings Hester and Pearl to the scaffold? What effect does their presence have on Dimmesdale?
5. What evidence does Hawthorne provide of Dimmesdale's paranoia?
6. Why is Dimmesdale's glove an important image with which to end this chapter? How is the meteor linked to it?

Chapters 13-15 (Hester)

1. The community's view of Hester and the "A" she wears has changed since the opening scene. Why? The view of the leaders is much the same though. Why? Does the discrepancy imply a shortcoming on the part of the leaders? If so, what is it?
2. How has Hester's appearance changed? Is this change related to the effect she has on the community? How?
3. Describe the emotional turmoil Hester has experienced before the meeting with Dimmesdale in Chapter 12.
4. In what way does Hawthorne make his generalizations about Hester's character specific? In other words, what actions does she take as a result of meeting Dimmesdale at the scaffold?
5. What recognition does Chillingworth have in Chapter 14?
6. How does Chillingworth's appearance reflect his emotional state?
7. Early in the novel, what two promises has Hester vowed to keep? How have these promises helped to precipitate action in the novel?
8. Why does Hester express hatred for Chillingworth?
9. How does Pearl feel about hitting the bird? What does this feeling suggest about the development of her character?
10. What does Pearl know about the "A"? Why does she continue to ask her mother about it?

Chapters 16-19 (Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale)

1. Hawthorne seems to give each of the following pairs of things or persons a multiple significance. What does the author actually tell you or suggest about the relation of each to what seems to be the main idea of the story?
    - A. Dimmesdale's study/forest
    - B. sunlight/shadow
    - C. Pearl/brook or forest
    - D. Black Man/"A"
2. Describe the meeting between Dimmesdale and Hester. What seems to be the emotional effect on each? How does Hawthorne use nature to help convey this effect?
3. What effect does Hester's plan have on Dimmesdale? on Hester herself? What element of her character allows her to make this decision while Dimmesdale cannot?
4. What features has Pearl inherited from Dimmesdale? How does Hester describe the child to the minister?
5. Why does Hester feel estranged from Pearl? How does Pearl sense this estrangement?
6. Why does Hester feel doom when again she dons the "A"?
7. What does Pearl do when the minister kisses her? Why?

Chapters 20-24 (Dimmesdale, Hester, Pearl)

1. Why have Hester and Dimmesdale settled on Europe as an escape?

2. How has Dimmesdale's double standard affected his physical and emotional health at this point?
3. What does Hawthorne mean by the "total change of dynasty and moral code" in Dimmesdale?
4. What five people does Dimmesdale meet on his way home? How does he respond to each? Why does he respond as he does?
5. What sort of knowledge does Dimmesdale have after the meeting in the wood?
6. What is the significance of the title of Chapter 20?
7. What does Chillingworth guess about his relationship with Dimmesdale?
8. On what does Dimmesdale work until dawn?
9. What does Pearl ask Hester about the minister? What does Hester reply? What is Pearl's response?
10. What is the effect of Hawthorne's opposing the English holiday to the Puritan holiday? the pirates to the Puritans?
11. What does Hester learn from the ship captain?
12. A change has come over Dimmesdale since the previous day. What is it? How does this change affect Hester and Pearl?
13. What knowledge does Mistress Hibbins seem to have? How might she have obtained this knowledge?

14. What does the seaman ask Pearl to tell Hester?

15. About what does Dimmesdale preach? What is the crowd's response?

16. Describe what happens at the scaffold. What part does each main character play in this event?

17. How do Dimmesdale's final moments affect Pearl?

18. How do you respond to Dimmesdale's final speech? Why do you respond as you do?

19. What is the tone of paragraphs 2 and 3 in Chapter 24? How has Hawthorne created that tone?

20. What happened to Chillingworth? How does Pearl profit from this event? How does Pearl's profit affect Puritan attitudes toward her?

21. What happens to Pearl?

22. Why does Hester return to Boston? Beside whom is she buried?

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Zora Neale Hurston

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Overview

Critical Commentary. Since its publication in 1937, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston's second novel, has been the object of mixed criticisms. One critic, Cyrena Pondrom, catalogues a staggering number of ambivalent views:

> It has been praised for expressing the genius of Black folklore and denounced for presenting the Negro as a folkloric stereotype. It has been cited as an apologia for traditional sex roles and praised as one of the earliest and clearest black feminist novels. It has been analyzed as a quest for self-fulfillment or self-identity and as a novel about black love and the humanistic values that love embodies, and it has been both defended and condemned as a novel which expresses its protest against white injustice only by affirming the creative power of black folk life. (181)

S. Jay Walker finds it particularly interesting that, as a book by a black author, it

> deals far more extensively with sexism, the struggle of a woman to be regarded as a person in a male-dominated society, than racism, the struggle of blacks to be regarded as persons in a white-dominated society. It is a treatment virtually unique in the annals of black fiction. . . . (520)

In her autobiographical *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston addresses her lack of emphasis on race differences:

> . . . from what I read and heard, Negroes were supposed to write about the Race Problem. I was and am thoroughly sick of the subject. My interest lies in what makes a man do such-and-so, regardless of his color. It seemed to me that the human beings I met reacted pretty much the same to the same stimuli. Different idioms, yes. Circumstances and conditions having power to influence, yes. Inherent difference, no. (214)

Although Hurston does not actively pursue the "Race Problem," racial disharmony is clearly present in some of the novel's scenes. By not dwelling on the issue, Hurston produces a story with a more universal appeal, one that Mary Helen Washington calls "probably the most beautiful love story of a black man and woman in literature" (Stanford and Amin 46).

The amount of contention over just exactly what this novel *is* should suggest the wide spectrum of critical approaches that could provide insight into the work. The story, for example, contains many archetypal images and motifs—the Biblical Creation, Fall, and Flood (Stanford and Amin 46) and parallels in Babylonian, Greek, and Egyptian mythology (Pondrom 182)—and the imagery-packed language that appeals to formalists. While classes (and individual students) should be encouraged to explore a variety of critical approaches, this guide concentrates on the use of psychoanalytic and social criticism and employs reader response strategies as means of engaging the students' involvement in the story.

The psychoanalytic approach attempts to explain why characters act the way that they do and how the author manipulates them. For the critic, of course, this means considering explanations based on the conscious as well as the subconscious, the esoteric as well as the exoteric. The search for these explanations can run the gamut of psychological thought, and frequent emphasis on particular aspects of psychological theory, notably subconscious sexual fixations, has given the approach a rather loathsome reputation. What remains fundamentally important in the psychoanalytic approach, however, is the more traditional view of motivation based on needs, both physical and psychological.

More often than not, human needs are linked to other humans who provide (or withhold), directly or indirectly, that which the individual requires. In that sense, the psychological makeup of the individual is inextricably entwined with the society in which the individual exists.

The societies and social situations depicted in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* closely parallel psychological aspects of the protagonist, Janie. Her story lies in three segments depicting her life with successive husbands in varying social environments. While young Janie yearns for a rich, happy life linked symbolically to a verdant, fertile pear tree, she is forced into a marriage with a middle-aged man, Logan Killicks, by her grandmother, who sees Killicks as a means through which Janie can be protected from physical want. Not surprisingly, Janie finds this alliance completely at odds with what she wants, and she abandons Killicks to elope with Jody Starks. Although this marriage quickly loses its appeal, Janie seems unable to act—either to improve the marriage or to abandon it. Starks eventually dies, however, leaving Janie (as she has been for some time) financially secure. Finally, she marries Vergible "Tea Cake" Woods, a man much her junior, and achieves that which she has sought—being an equal partner in a life devoted to a happy existence. Once this perfect state has been achieved, however, all that can remain is its loss: a series of tragic circumstances leads to the death of Tea Cake.

Each of the three marriages involves Janie in a different social situation symbolized by her attire and her immediate environment. She wears as apron in the kitchen of Killicks' farmhouse, a head kerchief in Starks' store, and overalls on "the muck" with Tea Cake. As the wife of Logan Killicks, whose farm is relatively isolated, Janie sees herself as an unequal part of a society of two. The farm offers her nothing but shelter and food—not social interaction or companionship. Joe Starks, who effectually founds and dominates the town of Eatonville, sees Janie as a showpiece for the customers of his store, not as a contributing member of the society that revolves around the porch of the store. Tea Cake extricates Janie from the store, incorporating her, both physically and socially, into the external environment. Their happiness is secured in the marshlands of south Florida, where they work side by side and join the society of the wild mixture of migrant workers.

The three social situations are strongly linked to the environment through the attitudes of Janie's husbands, and each man is at least partially defeated by his anthropocentric (and egocentric) beliefs. Killicks strives to force a livelihood from the land, forsaking the needs of Janie, who has no real connection with anything outside of the house. Starks—a god-like figure announced by his favorite expletive, "I god"—unyieldingly molds his environment to suit his needs, leaving Janie in a position to recognize and observe what she wants without being able to grasp it. Tea Cake seems content to take what nature offers him; his aloofness serves him well until he fails to heed nature's warnings about an approaching hurricane because "you can't have a hurricane when you're making seven and eight dollars a day picking beans" (Hurston 229). Tea Cake and Janie are symbolically trapped between the whites, who seem to control the environment, figuratively and literally holding the high ground, and the Seminoles, whose warnings of danger go unheeded because of their supposed ignorance and low social position, despite their intimate connection with nature. Janie also falls victim to egocentric beliefs; although she knows from the start exactly what she wants, she seems to assume that everyone else—Nanny, Killicks, Starks, and even Tea Cake—shares that knowledge, and it is only by vocalizing her dreams that she can make them possible.

The ubiquitous "three" that is embodied in the marriages, environments, and apparel—and in other aspects of the story—holds a multifarious symbolic significance in psychological thought. It is at once the number of the personality—the integration of the id, ego, and superego—and the symbol of communication—or transition—from the physical to the spiritual, the number that designates the individual in relation to the family and the resolution of conflict. The diversity and significance of these interpretations are demonstrated by the Appendix, which cites a variety of interpretations and offers notes about their application to the text.

Potential for Teaching. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is an excellent novel for use in high school English classes of almost any ability level. The engaging style and subject matter offer a wide appeal, and students who are facing first tentative romantic entanglements should have no problem in finding some part of themselves reflected in the story. While a psychological approach to the novel may not seem appropriate for lower secondary grades initially, the attention to the characters' psychological makeup—and attendant problems—might offer a perspective that students in those grades may lack.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. The greatest challenge offered by this text is its language; most of the dialogue and parts of the narration are written in dialect. The pseudophonetic spelling and idiomatic language may hamper an easy understanding. Students might be encouraged to read problem passages orally, and they should certainly be prompted to attend to the meaning of full sentences as a means of comprehending troublesome words. In addition, teachers should be alerted to the fact that the text does employ (sparingly) the words "God" and "nigger"—the former without parochial intent and the latter by blacks expressing their own perceptions of whites' beliefs.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* the students will be able to. . .

Psychological

1. employ psychological concepts in order to explain character motivation
2. identify and explain instances of the use of significant psychological symbolism
3. relate characters' ability to communicate with their ability to achieve their goals

Social

4. identify and interpret race and gender disparity in the context of the period
5. analyze the connection between humans' environment and their social interaction

Reader Response

6. relate the motivation and needs expressed by the fictional characters to their own lives

Prereading Activities

Prereading Activities to Introduce the Novel

1. Have students take turns drawing silhouettes of each others' head on construction paper. This can be done by seating students between paper taped to a wall and a light source (a lamp or an overhead projector). Have the students divide their "head" into three portions and fill each

section with drawings of what they feel are their major needs and desires. This should include basic needs like food and shelter, but also affective needs. They might explain their representation in journal entries or in small groups.

2. As a class, brainstorm instances of the use of threes in stories and traditional thought. Try to elicit widely familiar examples and some that are more obscure, as well as examples of both the "good third" and the "bad third." Have students summarize the more obscure stories for the class.

3. As a journal entry, have students relate an incident in which a misunderstanding or miscommunication produced an amusing or frustrating situation.

4. As a journal entry, have students compare/contrast what they want or need (career, family life, etc.) to what others around them *think* they want or need.

5. Have students investigate and report on psychological concepts such as id, ego, superego, the unconscious, abulia, reaction-formation, pleasure principle, reality principle, conjunctio, the symbolism of the number three (see Appendix), and Maslow's needs hierarchy.

6. Have students research and report on the social background of the novel's setting: general information about the 1930's, black/white

relations during the 1930's, male/female social roles during the 1930's, and Eatonville, Florida.

Prereading Activities for Chapters 1-4

1. Journal entry: What is your definition of love? What does it mean to be married?
2. Read aloud the first three paragraphs of Chapter 1. Ask the class to try to explain them in terms of predictions about the story to follow.
3. Read the remainder of Chapter 1 aloud and ask students to explain the framing of the story.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 1-4

1. Contrast Nanny's views of love and marriage with those of Janie.
2. Orchestrate an informal debate over the way Killicks and Janie treat each other. Points to consider include the characters' expectations and reasons that those expectations are not realized.
3. Have the class consider whether males or females have the better chance of getting a "perfect mate" in the society depicted in this novel. Why? How does this compare to the way things are in contemporary society?

Prereading Activities for Chapters 5-8

1. Journal entry: Under what circumstances do you prefer to be alone? When do you prefer to be around others?

2. Have students write their predictions about what will happen to Janie and Joe Starks. Ask them to explain why they make these particular predictions.
3. Alert the students to the fact that *talking* and *not talking* play important roles in this section. They should also be alert to instances of humans manipulating their environment.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 5-8

1. Have students compare/contrast Janie's relationships with Logan Killicks and Joe Starks and the ways that she deals with the two men. Why are her approaches to what amount to the same problem so different?
2. Journal entry: What does the porch symbolize for Janie? Describe the porch talk. What does the porch talk tell you about the men of Eatonville?
3. Discuss how problems in communication have contributed to Janie's unhappiness. Who is at fault?

Prereading Activities for Chapters 9-13

1. Journal entry: Who do you think will be Janie's next husband? Why? (If you do not like any of the established characters, create one.)

2. Have the class discuss the new relationship between Janie and the community. How will the community act towards Janie? How will she act? Why?

3. Alert the students to be watchful for similarities between Starks' funeral and that of Bonner's mule.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 9-13

1. Have the students compare/contrast Tea Cake with Starks and Killicks.
2. Discuss the role that communication plays in keeping this marriage going after the second day. How is this a major difference in the way the characters have been interacting previously?
3. Discuss similarities between Starks' funeral and the funeral of Bonner's mule. What irony does this comparison bring out?

Prereading Activities for Chapters 14-18

1. Journal entry: Describe your "special place," the place where you are (or could be) most comfortable. What are its important features? Might your "special place" be as special to someone else?
2. Have the students make a list of the specific aspects of Janie's life that they think will be reversed due to her relationship with Tea Cake and their move to the muck.
3. Alert the students to the importance of social relationships in this section.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 14-18

1. Have students examine and respond to the predictions they made in Prereading #2. How accurate was each? Why?
2. Discuss how this section shows a reversal of the anthropocentristic man-over-nature arrangement of Chapters 5-8.
3. Have students describe and explain the attitudes the workers have towards the "Saws," the Seminoles, the Turners, the whites, and nature. Which of these attitudes undergo change in this section?

Prereading Activities for Chapters 19-20

1. Journal entry: Describe an event that changed—perhaps even reversed—your opinion or attitude about something or someone.
2. Have students make predictions about the specific circumstances that will lead to Janie's return to Eatonville.
3. Alert the students to note upcoming events which highlight racial prejudice.

Postreading Activities for Chapters 19-20

1. Journal entry: Discuss Janie's belief that it is up to *society* to determine whether or not she has "sinned," a matter traditionally addressed by religion. Why does she feel this way? Is she right or wrong? Why?

2. Discuss the contrast between what Tea Cake experiences in Palm Beach and Janie's perceptions of the trial. These are the two most pointed instances of racial disparity, but why are they so different?

3. Discuss the differences between the Janie who left Eatonville and the Janie who returned.

Postreading Activities for the Novel

1. Have the students compare and discuss their responses on the Guide for Reading in small groups. The groups should then make a brief summary of their findings so results can be compared on the class level.

2. Using the Guide for Reading, discuss the recurrence of threes in the story, tying the various symbolic meanings of the number to specific instances in the novel.

3. Remind the students of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Have them brainstorm and cluster the various characters' needs based on this heirarchy.

4. Discuss how the story would be different if it were told from a male perspective (or, alternatively, how it would be different if told from a white female's perspective).

5. Assign individuals or small groups to produce collages depicting the three different versions of Janie, the three husbands, or the three social

environments. (An alternate strategy would be to have different individuals focus on one of the three of any of these aspects and meet to compare their results).

6. Have groups script and present a dialogue among Janie's husbands, discussing such subjects as their views on life and marriage, their personal needs, and their attitudes towards Janie.

Guide for Reading

The accompanying Guide for Reading is designed to help students trace *leitmotivs* as they read. The Guide itself serves only as a log; the implications of the specific items supplied by the students should be addressed by class discussions at strategic points during or after reading. The teacher should specify the types of conflict (personal desires, social, race, gender) on which the class reading will focus. Other considerations that might be incorporated in the Guide, depending on need or desirability, are other significant symbols, vocabulary (especially dialect), and the use of the word *man* (as a general or a gender-specific term).

Evaluation and Enrichment

The following essay topics may be used in evaluating students' understanding of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and related critical concepts.

1. Compare and contrast the three different "eras" of Janie's life represented by her husbands, environments, and characteristic attire.

2. Discuss how problems of communication and freedom to communicate contribute to Janie's unhappiness. Cite specific incidents from the text.
3. Discuss Janie's needs and her attempts to fulfill them in terms of Maslow's needs hierarchy.
4. Have students read Shelley's "Ozymandias," Robinson's "Richard Cory," and Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young" and draw comparisons between the poems' themes and the novel's characters.
5. Have students read one of the works identified in the prereading discussion of the use of threes and write an interpretation based on the symbolism.

The following activities can be used for enrichment or extension purposes.

6. Have students read all or parts of *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston's autobiography, and report on relevant aspects of her life, such as her life in Eatonville, her anthropological studies, or influences on her writing.
7. Have students act out various scenes from the novel. Scenes of particular interest would include the trial, either of the funerals, an evening on the porch at Starks' store, or the mayhem at the Turners' cafe.

8. Have students produce original artwork or creative writings depicting any of the characters from a perspective other than that offered in the text, such as Killicks responding to the disappearance of his wife or Janie ten years after the death of Tea Cake.
9. Have students research and report on the folklore of the various cultures depicted in the novel, including the blacks, the Seminoles, and the "Saws."
10. Read one (or more) urban legend from Jan Harold Brunvand's book, *Curses! Broiled Again!* Have students embellish an incident from Janie's story, making it into an urban legend that will circulate around Eatonville.

Related Reading

"When the Bow Breaks" (Elizabeth Enright). A young girl witnesses the results of a woman's unfulfilled psychological needs for a child.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" (Charlotte Perkins Gilman). This story depicts a man's attempt to mold his wife into his image of what a wife should be, without regard for her own wishes.

Dust Tracks on a Road (Zora Neale Hurston). Hurston's autobiography examines her interest in anthropology and her need to write.

Mules and Men (Zora Neale Hurston). "A collection of folklore, tales, music, and hoodoo rituals recorded within a framework of Southern black speech and social life" (Stanford and Amin 47).

"Sweat" (Zora Neale Hurston). Preceding *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by eleven years, this is the story of a hardworking wife and her abusive husband, who dies in an ironic reversal.

The Pearl (John Steinbeck). A poor Mexican Indian family find themselves perilously trapped between the benefits and dangers of newfound wealth.

The Color Purple (Alice Walker). Alice Walker acknowledges Hurston's influence on her writing, and this epistolary novel bears a strong resemblance to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in both theme and action.

"A Worn Path" (Eudora Welty). An old woman undertakes an arduous trek in order to obtain medicine for her ailing grandson.

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Guide for Reading

Their Eyes Were Watching God

As you read, record instances in which you see the number three (or things happening in threes), problems in communication, and conflicts. Write the page number and a brief note for each. Responses will be discussed later.

THREE (for each instance listed, indicate with a "+" or "-" whether each instance is "good" or "bad")

PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION

Appendix

As a symbol, the number three is, perhaps, the most potent and diverse of all numbers. Most world cultures and religions give special significance to the number three, the most easily-recognizable example being Christianity's Holy Trinity. In psychological thought, three is equally significant and even more diverse. Various psychological meanings of the number three can be related to the action, characters, and themes of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The scope and depth of a class's examination of these symbolic connections, of course, should be determined by the teacher, based on the students' relative maturity and academic ability.

One of the most logical associations with the number three is that of childbirth—the derivation of a third element from the conjunction of two others. Bruno Bettelheim also asserts that three is even more overtly sexual, standing for the number of visible sex characteristics of each gender (219). Sexual overtones should not limit the idea of birth to a biological context, however; the derived third can be the resolution of a conflict (Cirlot 235), the result of the conjunction of two opposing forces.

Given Janie's three marriages, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is curiously devoid of childbirth. Pairs in conflict, however, abound: Nanny, Killicks, Starks, and the inhabitants of Eatonville oppose Janie's desires. The results of those conflicts progressively lead Janie to a total resolution—her contentment with (and after) Tea Cake. The multiplicity here should not be overlooked: The conflicts have their own resolutions, and these, in turn, build toward the realization of Janie's goal and beyond.

Another embodiment of the psychological three is the well-known Oedipus complex, which, in its least restrictive sense, is the close relationship of three people. Janie lives out an odd, regressive form of the oedipal triangle. Raised by neither parent, she attaches her dreams of happiness to a loving husband. Her three subsequent marriages are to men whose ages vary considerably. Killicks is old enough to be her father, Starks is roughly her own age, and Tea Cake is young enough to be her son. Janie rejects Killicks (the father image) and Starks (the agemate) to find love with Tea Cake (the child image).

The three marriages also parallel the idea that the number three "symbolizes the search for one's personal and one's social identity" (Bettelheim 220), for Janie's search is not simply for love; it is also for her own personal identity, which is ultimately incomplete without the context of the social environment.

The search for self-identity is linked by other means to the number three. Bettelheim argues that the preponderance of threes in children's stories serves to link the story to the child because the child's self-perception is that of the third element in the family (the other two being the parents), regardless of the number of siblings (106). The idea that "the third is the charm," then, is a form of flattery, and a reader naturally expects the third element to be superior. Certainly this is the case with Janie's story, for the reader must expect (or at least hope) the third marriage will be the biggest success. The "bad" third element is the reversal of the expected, not a flattering but an affront, and it is by this same reckoning that the death of Tea Cake is felt to be even more tragic.

Another way in which the number three serves symbolically in the search for identity is in the integration of the three aspects of the personality—the id, ego, and superego. In simple terms, the id embodies the drive for satisfaction at any cost, the ego directs the id in terms of the external environment, and the superego provides a sense of conscience to govern the actions inspired by the id/ego interaction. While Janie's three marriages are not allegories for the id, ego, and superego, they do demonstrate the functioning of the personality. Janie's marriage to Killicks ends abruptly with Janie's flight; id-like, she has been rebellious and self-centered, seeking only personal satisfaction. Her marriage to Starks becomes just as unsatisfactory to her, but she does not actively seek its dissolution; she has attempted to manipulate her environment to her satisfaction, but even failure in that seems more acceptable than flight from the relationship. Finally, Janie's alliance with

Tea Cake provides her with satisfaction and is dissolved only reluctantly; Janie's superego, in the form of social and personal conscience, dictates her actions and qualifies her needs. Only in her relationship with Tea Cake does she genuinely consider the feelings and needs of others.

This triumvirate of id, ego, and superego can be interpreted, respectively, as instinct, mind, and sentiment. Through these can be seen the idea of communication—a term synonymous with progression—between the earthly (body) and the heavenly (spiritual) that is attributed to the number three. Graphically, three is presented as a triangle, an intermediate between the square (earth) and the circle (heaven) (Cirlot 292). Janie's growth during the course of the novel clearly reflects this movement from the base to the noble. In this sense, the pear tree with which Janie associates herself could be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the number three; the pear's fruit, wider at the bottom than at the top, is roughly triangular.

Strictly speaking, of course, the formation of an integrated personality is not an orderly progression of the three parts, but progressions of threes are prevalent in human thought—particularly in thought concerning human existence. J. E. Cirlot, in discussing the common occurrence of trios in myths and legends, argues that three suggests the asymmetrical cycle of human life, "composed of two parts which are ascending (infancy-adolescence, youth-maturity) and the third and last which is descending (old age-death)" (236-37).

This is further compared to "the asymmetrical cycle of the year (Spring—Summer—Autumn followed by Winter)" (237) and to creation, conservation, and destruction (100). Janie's story—her quest for happiness—is similarly patterned; she grows from desire to achievement. Hurston's book is not simply about Janie's life, for Janie's life is not over—nor is she defeated. Instead, it is the story of Janie's progression in her quest; only this aspect of her development has ended.

The story, of course, ends tragically for Janie: she does not simply lose Tea Cake, she is forced to take an active role in his death. The third element in the cycle of life (and the third marriage for Janie) culminates in death—after a successful progression (life). The unfortunate—and inevitable—end of this cycle, according to Cirlot, makes the number three correspond "to all symbols of the 'superior'—for superiority is always perilous" (237).

"A White Heron"

Sarah Orne Jewett

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Overview

Critical Commentary. Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron" can be analyzed using the pattern of the heroic archetype, which is defined as the process of transformation and redemption. In this story, Sylvia, a nine-year-old girl, undergoes an excruciating ordeal in passing from ignorance and immaturity to social and spiritual adulthood. The standard path of this mythological adventure is represented in the rites of passage: separation, initiation, and return. According to Joseph Campbell, in this archetype or monomyth,

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (30)

Although there are many ways an adventure can begin, all originate with the "call to adventure." This is the time when the hero realizes that because she is different from other people there is something she must do. After much (or little) consideration of this challenge, the hero "crosses the threshold" and begins this quest. Sylvia's quest began when she left the "crowded manufacturing town" and went to live with her grandmother in the country. Here she seemed to be at home in nature, almost like ancient mythological characters such as Persephone, who was daughter of Zeus and Demeter, goddess of agriculture. Persephone was carried into Hades by Pluto, god of the underworld, to reign with him. The key to Sylvia's vivacity was that she was in harmony with nature (Nagel 60). However, she soon entered her "road of trial" as she met the ornithologist, who proved to be her "tempter." Although he treated her kindly, called her "little girl," and even offered her money if she would lead him to where the white heron was hiding, there was something threatening in the man that made Sylvia fearful and predisposed her finally to reject him.

There comes a point in the initiation motif when the hero is entrapped (figuratively or literally) and needs supernatural aid. This passage of the magical threshold is a "transit into a sphere of rebirth" which is symbolized by the universal image of the belly of the whale, where the hero is swallowed and appears to have died (Campbell 90). This moment came for Sylvia as she struggled with the question of the "wished-for treasures" versus her affinity with nature manifested in her desire to save the heron. The next day the tempter appeared again as he and Sylvia kept each other company in the woods. Sylvia's desire for the money had now changed to a desire for the man himself. Some premonition of a great power permeated Sylvia and prepared her for the "night sea journey" which was to come. This journey occurred the next morning when Sylvia climbed the great pine which represents the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The very height of the tree slowed her progress. However, she patiently persevered in order to gain "a discovery of the ultimate boon," which was the elusive white heron.

Once Sylvia had discovered that which she was seeking, she was ready to cross the "return threshold." The descent of the tree was a perilous journey. Sylvia dared not look down, "ready to cry sometimes because her fingers ache and her lamed feet slip." She wondered over and over what the hunter would think when she told him how to find the way to the heron's nest. However, Sylvia came home "paler than ever" with "her worn old frock torn, tattered and smeared with pine pitch."

One problem of the returning hero is "to accept as real, after an experience of the soul-searching vision of fulfillment, the passing joys and sorrows, banalities and noisy obscenities of life" (Campbell 218). Sylvia now had to live in the real world as her grandmother rebuked her and the young man's kind, appealing eyes looked straight at her. In this real world she had to reconcile the impact of her own decision and its effect upon both the hunter and Grandmother in order to be given a place of honor and respect in society. Her apotheosis came with the realization that she must keep silent. Sylvia had chosen to thrust aside both money and love for the sake of a bird. However, because of Sylvia's sacrifice, she passed from ignorance and immaturity to social and spiritual adulthood.

In addition to employing an archetypal approach, teachers who wish to explore the effects of the text on individual readers might employ a reader response approach in teaching "A White Heron." Reader response questions evoke students' own experience with the work. In soliciting this type of response, teachers may use four questions which Judith Fetterley recommends: (1) What happens in the story? (2) What did you feel after you read the story? (3) What in your personal experience did the story call forth? (4) What is the most central image, word, or moment in the story?

In considering these questions, readers realize that they can respond in a variety of ways to a text. Also, in order to support their responses, readers must return to the text, an act which may change, enlarge, or clarify their opinions and feelings. Although the reader response critic does not believe that one can ignore the text, this approach provides readers an aesthetic experience gained from examining a text through the way it affects their own lives and feelings. Thus, they can more readily make the work their own.

Potential for Teaching. "A White Heron" is an excellent story to teach to senior high school students. It is an easily accessible work which often appears in commerical anthologies. Its brevity, fairly simple vocabulary, uncomplicated sentence structure, and familiar story grammar should make it understandable to students on any ability level. Because most adolescents are themselves facing many difficulties in making the transition from childhood to maturity, they should be able to identify with Sylvia. They can empathize with her as she struggles to make her decision and can wrestle with their own value systems as she does. "A White Heron" also presents a good opportunity to teach different levels of meaning in a story. It can be read simply as the story of a nine-year-old girl who grew up in a dirty and crowded New England manufacturing town, went searching for a lost cow, and protected the white heron from the hunter. On the other hand, "A White Heron" is an excellent story to use as a tool for developing higher order skills such as understanding symbolism in a story, being able to relate literature to students' own experience, and using reading material as a source for writing.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. Students reading this story for the first time may experience certain difficulties. One problem they may encounter is accepting a nine-year-old girl as the hero. It may seem unbelievable that such a young child could experience so great a transcendence. Students living in an urban area may also experience difficulty relating to Sylvia's feelings about nature and to the values it represents to her. Another potential problem is some students' lack of background in American history, which may limit their understanding of the conflict presented by the Industrial Revolution. Textual inconsistencies which exist in the story cause another problem. Shifts in verb tense, changing points of view, and authorial commentary may create confusion for an inexperienced reader. Also, students may become impatient with long descriptive passages which do little to advance the action.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying "A White Heron," the students will be able to . . .

Archetypal

1. identify the monomyth pattern as it is found in this story and recognize this pattern in other works
2. explain the symbolic meaning of the white heron, the dried-up geranium, climbing the tree, the hunter, the cow, and the name Sylvia as they are used in the story

Reader Response

3. relate experiences of their own lives that are similar to Sylvia's
4. identify multiple points of view presented in the story and explain their effects on responses to the story

Other

5. state three specific conflicts found within the story and identify the source of these conflicts
6. determine the meaning of selected vocabulary words by referring to previous personal experiences, to context clues, and to the dictionary
7. employ writing in order to demonstrate facility with various modes of written communication: free response, description, narrative

Prereading Activities

1. Explain the monomyth pattern as related by Campbell in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* and as it is summarized in the Overview above.
2. Review the nature of symbols. This can be done in the form of a symbol search game. Ask students to think of as many as they can and tell what each symbol stands for. Some examples are road signs, a red rose, and the American flag.
3. Conduct a class discussion using a short story, novel, or familiar movie, tracing the monomyth pattern as it appears in the text. Examples are "By the Waters of Babylon," *Huckleberry Finn*, and *Star Wars*.
4. Review definitions of first person, third person limited, and third person omniscient points of view. Then ask students to give examples

of each from previous reading and to discuss how a given story would be different if it were told from a different point of view.

5. Each group will discuss three types of conflict: man against man, man against nature, and man against himself. Students will then give examples of these from their previous reading or personal experience.

6. Group members will read each of the first four paragraphs of the story. Students will then respond in their journals to the following items:
   A. Write at least four things that have happened in the story so far.
   B. Write your prediction of what the story is about.
   C. Tell about an animal that has meant a great deal to you.

Guide for Reading

The Guide for Reading which appears at the end of this unit is intended to focus attention on symbolism and on vocabulary in context. Students should be given copies of the Guide before reading the story, take time to complete the activities individually after reading is completed, and use their written response during postreading activities.

Postreading Activities

After silent reading has been completed, divide the class into groups and assign for each group a recorder who will take notes. Each group will discuss the following questions. After groups have completed their work, a general class discussion can be conducted. An individual from each group will be responsible for reporting major points of the discussion, or a panel discussion can be held.

1. Take out your journals and turn to the entry where you focused on the meanings of certain symbols by word association. Now that you have read "A White Heron" and completed your Guide for Reading, discuss the meanings of these symbols in the context of the story. Compare these meanings with those that you wrote in your journal before reading the story.
2. Based on the first three paragraphs of the story, what would you say is the protagonist's chief character trait? How are Sylvia and the heron alike? (Kearns 318)
3. "A White Heron" presents the disparity between two sets of factors. Sylvia's world of nature is contrasted with the world of the town, and each of these settings entails a set of values that runs contrary to the other's. Identify the values that are linked to the two settings and discuss how you think Jewett wanted readers to feel about the two different settings and their accompanying values. Support your responses with specific passages from the text. (Pelegano 44)
4. The author of "A White Heron" employs several shifts in narrative point of view, even intruding occasionally to present her own opinions. She actually addresses Sylvia directly in one instance. Identify examples

of the various points of view and authorial intrusions. How do these affect your interpretation of the story and your reaction to it? (Pelegano 44)

5. What did Sylvia lose by keeping her knowledge of the heron's nest a secret? What did she gain? Considering your own values related to materialism, popularity, and nature, do you think you would have made the same decision Sylvia made? Why or why not?
6. Trace the characteristics of the monomyth that you see in this story.
7. Compare your original definitions of vocabulary words found in the Guide for Reading. Then compare them with the dictionary's definitions. Do your definitions agree with the dictionary's definitions? If they do not agree, correct the definitions in your journal by using the dictionary.

Evaluation

Students' understanding of the short story and their success in fulfilling instructional objectives will be determined in part by how they answer questions in postreading activities and on their Guide for Reading. The following evaluation activities may also be used to assess their understanding.

1. Write an essay in which you discuss the questions below, which were presented by George Kearns and accompanied by the following quotation from Willa Cather: "Miss Jewett wrote of the people who

grew out of the soil and the life of the country near her heart, not about exceptional individuals at war with their environment."

A. How would you describe the relationship between Sylvia and her environment?

B. What are the advantages and limitations of such a relationship?

C. Do you think Sylvia is nevertheless an "exceptional individual"? Why or why not? (319)

2. Compose an essay in which you discuss the symbolism of the white heron. Be sure to discuss the significance of the bird's color and the fact that this bird is rarely sighted. Also consider what aspects of Sylvia can be seen as being represented by the heron. Ultimately, you should explain how the symbolic significance of the white heron relates to what you think is the theme of the work. (Kearns 320)

3. Write a description of a place which has a special significance for you. Begin by giving a general description of the area, then complete the description by including sensory details and impressions that would make a reader "see" this setting as you do. (Kearns 320)

4. Write an original sketch or short story in which you select a character who is struggling to make a decision. By using the steps of the monomyth as they appear in "A White Heron," show that your character experiences a transformation.

Related Reading

1. "I'm a Fool" (Sherwood Anderson). The story of a young man's experiences with young love and with dishonesty.
2. "By the Waters of Babylon" (Stephen Vincent Benet). A science fiction story which describes a boy's rite of passage at some future time following a near annihilation of civilization.
3. "The Bear" (William Faulkner). The story of a conflict between rites of manhood and the protagonist's personal feelings about nature.
4. *A Separate Peace* (John Knowles). The story of how Gene, a high school student in a New England private school, changes as he accepts the death of his best friend, a death which Gene himself indirectly causes.
5. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harper Lee). The story of how Scout and Jem, two children in rural Alabama, learn to deal with the prejudices shown by Southern aristocratic society.
6. "The Chrysanthemums" (John Steinbeck). A young woman who dreams of a more romantic life for herself is disappointed by her encounters with a traveling salesman.
7. *Walden* (Henry David Thoreau). An account of the author's two-year stay in the country, going back to basics in order to find himself.
8. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain). A rebellious young boy runs away from his Missouri home, has numerous adventures while

rafting south on the Mississippi River with a runaway slave as his companion, and finally becomes aware of society's injustices.

9. *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Unknown). An ancient Sumerian poem which details the journey of Gilgamesh in his quest for eternal life.

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Guide for Reading

"A White Heron"

1. As you read the story, locate each of the following words, which may be unfamiliar or have multiple meanings. Use only personal experience and context clues to help formulate definitions, and then write these definitions in your journals.

    a. dilatory
    b. discreetly
    c. inaudibly
    d. proffered
    e. hermitage
    f. premonition
    g. traversed
    h. elusive
    i. vex
    j. plaguy
    k. hitch
    l. ornithologist
    m. dumb
    n. pinions

2. Before you read the story, think about the possible meaning of the following symbols which occur in the story: (A) white heron, (B) dried-up geranium, (C) hunter, (D) cow, (E) climbing a tree, and (F) the name Sylvia. After you have read and discussed the story, tell how these objects function in this story. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

SYMBOL/IMAGE	HOW IT FUNCTIONS IN THE STORY
white heron	
dried-up geranium	
hunter	
cow	
climbing a tree	
Sylvia	

"The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"

Katherine Anne Porter

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Overview

Critical Commentary. "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" by Katherine Anne Porter relates the last hours prior to the death of the eighty-year-old central character. As she lies on her deathbed attended by her doctor, members of her family, and a priest, she wanders in and out of consciousness, blending the past with the present. She recollects her jilting at the altar sixty years earlier by what may very well have been her first love, whose identity is never revealed. It is the memory of this jilting that colors her recollection of a life seemingly rich in experience. Granny marries, but her husband dies young. She declares her own war of independence, raising four children, tending a farm, and helping neighbors. She works with dedicated toughness, a touch of feisty humor, and a passion for order. For sixty years she seeks to erase the memory and pain, not of the death of her husband but of the jilting. However, her reminiscing betrays the fact that she has neither forgotten nor forgiven. As her life ends, she is confronted with the price of that relentless burden: in death she is once again jilted when her spiritual bridegroom fails to appear.

Because of the subject of the story and the manner of Porter's telling of it, a number of critical approaches would be appropriate and challenging. Essentially lacking the kind of plot to which students are accustomed, the story automatically forces readers to search below the literal level for significance. First of all, New Criticism, which emphasizes the study of a work as an aesthetic whole and encourages stylistic analysis through a close reading of the text, offers significant insight. In order to find meaning, students will need to unravel Porter's imagery, symbolism, allusions, and irony. These techniques are presented in a relatively straightforward manner; yet for all their straightforwardness, they operate like a prism, refracting light—or meaning—differently. This alteration allows for differences of interpretation, particularly with regard to the inherent paradoxes, the identity of the enigmatic Hapsy, and the puzzling ending. For example, as she toys with the memory of the man who jilted her, Granny insists that he never harmed her ". . .and what if he did?" Moreover, she protests that in spite of the jilting, she had it all and yet—and yet? It was not all; there remained "Something not given back." Finally, the word *good* is used in curious and paradoxical ways. In speaking of her own life, Granny affirms that "it was good to be strong enough for everything," that her house and her husband had been "good." She speaks of good as an affirmation of life—"good things . . . good food." Yet in speaking of her daughter Cornelia, whom she delights in plaguing, Granny complains that she is so "dutiful and good . . . that I'd like to spank her." Finally, Dr. Harry warns Granny herself that "you must be careful or you're going to be good and sorry."

Irony and ambiguity surround the references to Hapsy, Granny's youngest—or oldest—daughter. She is the product of Granny's relationship with George—or John's daughter who died in childbirth. Is the play on her name intended to imply that because she died young she was happy—or does she signify her mother's elusive happiness? It was, after all, Hapsy that she "really wanted." Additional problems are created by Porter's use of pronouns whose antecedents are unclear. At the altar when Granny is jilted, "He had cursed like a sailor's parrot." And later a voice commands, "Now, Ellen, you must believe what I tell you." Neither "he" nor "I" is identified, and both stand as integral pieces of the puzzle.

Despite these problematical passages, patterns emerge which help provide the basis for, if not a definitive interpretation, at least a satisfying resolution to these ambiguities. New Criticism stresses the interaction of individual words, images, and passages which combine to make up meaning. Porter's words and images move to a melody, almost in tune with lyrical poetry. Foremost among these images are those of ordering. Granny's has been a life characterized by an obsessive need for order: brushes on dressers, rows of jelly glasses, fields of crops. In fact, not only has she demanded that her life have its edges tucked in tightly, but she even attempts to order her own dying. The irony is that while her external life is so carefully arranged, her internal life is in disarray. As Darlene Harbour Unrue points out, "Visible order does not ensure inner order or truth, as Granny Weatherall tragically discovers" (99).

A second strong pattern of imagery is that of colors, the interplay between light and darkness, between the whites and greens of truth and life, and the smoky grays and shadows of abandonment and loss of hope. From beginning to end, colors provide a contrast and a motif that are easily traceable, culminating with Granny's extinguishing her own light. By moving to the story's conclusion in this manner, Porter mirrors the New Critical dictum that inherent in style is meaning.

Although treating a text in New Critical fashion is a method with which both teachers and students can be comfortable, doing so may seem too limiting or confining. An alternative and highly relevant approach to this story might be the archetypal. According to Jung, archetypes are "fundamental patterns and forms of human experience which often take the shape of images and as such appear in connection with events such as birth and death" (Davis 218). In addition, many archetypes are found in the forms of individuals, including the Hero, the Wise Old Man, and the Earth Mother. It is, of course, the latter which figures so strongly in "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"—the Earth Mother as nurturer and caretaker, a role reinforced by her very name. That Granny is the quintessential Earth Mother is evident in her observation that "A woman needed milk in her to have her full health."

Granny is indeed a survivor, a creator of order. But she is, in addition, a vessel of wisdom which she feels compelled to pass on to her children—wisdom which she has achieved as a result of the central experience of her life. "If, as Katherine Anne Porter suggests, this life is all there is, then its value derives from how it is lived and what remains after" (Cobb 100). Reminiscent of the strong, vital Lucinda Matlock in Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, Granny might, like Lucinda, have affirmed to her survivors that "It takes life to love life" (239). Granny has learned the necessity of living, for at the end when the romantic candle in snuffed out, there will be no ultimate bridegroom. Furthermore, redolent of the mythical tale of Demeter and Persephone, birth and death are once again inextricably linked. Ultimately, this is not a story of death but the cyclical story of life. There is no death in the Earth Mother: she is the embodiment of fertility, associated with the land she must care for. She intends to live on in her children, the affirmation of life, the natural order of things.

Another essential component of Jung's theory of archetypes is the presence of special archetypes, the *anima* and the *animus*. Jung gives the *anima* a feminine designation in the male psyche, pointing out that the *anima* image is usually projected upon women (Guerin 180). In the female psyche the corresponding male element is known as the *animus*. In traditional literature, it is the *anima* or female ego that serves as the ideal mate for the hero in his quest. In the female the *animus* is individuated, allowing her to achieve great things. Granny is surrounded by *animus* figures—the priest, the doctor, George, John. Her life turns because of them. And despite her having assumed the responsibilities of life, from caring for babies to digging post holes, she has never individuated the experience of being jilted. She is possessed by the bridegroom, failing to integrate her *animus* into her conscious, and her incorporation occurs ultimately only with her death.

In her essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics," Elaine Showalter refers to "heroines who make careers out of betrayal, like Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*" (172). Granny Weatherall might have been such a character; she is betrayed, she strives, she succeeds—at least outwardly. In spite of her alleged independence, as Granny's story evolves, the traits and the problems of the stereotypical female emerge. According to Mary Poovey, approaching a text from a feminist perspective should encourage readers to investigate how a gender system has been reproduced in that text. In addition, readers need to question how much knowledge the character has gained about herself. Porter's story is fraught with possibilities for such an investigation. It pivots on one statement of tremendous import: "What does a woman"—not a bride but a woman—"do when she has put on the white veil and set out the white cake for a man and he doesn't come?" A woman's identity is grounded in that of a man. Even God is a suitor, a pattern that can be emphasized by a comparison with Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and with the Biblical story of the wise and foolish virgins who wait for the bridegroom Christ. The list is brief but incriminating. Women cannot rely on men: George runs, John dies, the doctor is not present during her earlier illness, and the priest offers her death while Granny demands life. Despite her obvious abilities, Granny is patronized and lied to. Doctor Harry instructs her to be a "good girl" and claims, "I never saw you look so young and happy!" Furthermore, it is the fate of women to grow old. Granny's fiance and husband both remain young, at least in her mind; the doctor is viewed as a "brat [who] ought to be in knee breeches." That Granny is resentful of growing old is made clear several times.

Granny's men do not bear children, suffer the pains of their births, or shoulder responsibility for raising them. Women, even in their independence, are not in control. As she dies, Granny imagines herself stepping into a cart, prepared to reach for the reins, "But a man sat beside her . . . driving the cart."

To some extent, Granny had expected identity and individuation as a result of marrying (DeMouy 48). Her fate, however, was a painful loss of personal identity, a loss that was not to be assuaged even in death.

Potential for Teaching. Porter's stream-of-consciousness technique allows students to analyze a central character by direct access to her thoughts. The story is brief enough to give them experience with this technique without the frustration that a longer work might create. It is an unusual piece of fiction well suited to upper level tenth graders and to all eleventh and twelfth graders. The concerns are universal—love and death. More specifically, the story demands that students look closely at the elusiveness of finding happiness when one clings to false dreams.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. Although the plot is simple, the sense is not to be had for the mere telling of the story. Porter's carefully woven structure may cause confusion both in determining the chronology of events and in identifying the people to whom Granny refers. In addition, the subject of death, particularly that of an eighty-year-old woman, may not appeal immediately to adolescents. The references to Catholic religious rituals and doctrines may present further difficulties for non-Catholic students. Finally, in order for students to understand and appreciate the story, it is necessary for them to begin to see how the gender systems created by society affect the lives of female protagonists in literature.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," the students will be able to . . .

New Criticism

1. discover how techniques of literary language, particularly symbols, patterns of imagery, and allusion, work to elucidate character and enrich a short work of fiction
2. explain how irony and paradox work together to develop characters

Archetypal

3. trace the use of stream of consciousness and flashback
4. identify Jung's archetypes in the story
5. observe how conscious and unconscious thought, like literature, employs imagery
6. discover that the unconscious reveals the true nature of an individual's concerns and desires

Feminist

7. identify male and female stereotypes in literature
8. explore the problem of the divided nature of women

Other

9. recognize the influence of the poetry of Emily Dickinson on Porter

Prereading Activities

1. Prior to assigning the story, acquaint students with the following vocabulary and allusions:

knee breeches
noggin
dyspepsia
Extreme Unction
saint
Spanish comb
frippery
the Hail Mary
whirligigs
amethyst
Holy Communion
original sin
St. Michael
piety
rosary

2. Students will understand archetypes better if they have some knowledge of the Biblical story of the wise and foolish virgins who wait through the night for the bridegroom Christ (Matthew 25: 1-13) and of the mythical tale of Demeter and Persephone. These stories can be related by the teacher or can be assigned as reports to be given in response to the ubiquitous pleas for extra credit.

3. Students will benefit from being introduced to some famous stereotypical women in art. Have them study prints of James Whistler's "Arrangement in Grey and Black" ("Whistler's Mother") and Grant Wood's "American Gothic" and write a brief character sketch of one or both of these women. Students might consider answering the following questions in their essays: What kind of life did the subject lead? (Give details of that life as you imagine them.) What were her accomplishments? Was she happy with her life? What is the basis for this conclusion? In addition, students should consider what impression the artist may have tried to convey. Finally, ask students to retitle the paintings and explain their choices.

4. Students can design their own stained glass window for a mythical church in any city of their choosing. They should portray themselves through symbols that reflect their interests, accomplishments, and values, considering the colors they use as an important consideration in their images. They can, if they choose, share explanations of their windows with the class.

5. Have students read the poem "Rivers" by Martin Jamison (Appendix A, "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," pp. 63-65) and discuss it with regard to the readers' perception of the poet's

purpose and the images he used in order to express his feelings. Then, as a stream-of-consciousness exercise, ask students to imagine themselves escaping their present surroundings by visualizing themselves in another time and place and to record their thoughts using images as part of their description. This directed freewriting should be entered in their journals and can be shared with their classmates if they wish.

6. In order to lead students to see the importance of symbols and imagery in both our conscious and unconscious thoughts, take them on a guided imagery tour. They are to imagine that they are eighty years old. They are very tired; their eyes begin to close. Ask them to describe or respond to the following, using figurative language as much as possible. Where are they? What are their surroundings like? What sorts of images pass through their minds? What are their concerns? How do they feel, physically and mentally? Description of this experience should also be entered in their journals.

7. Have individuals or groups conduct a treasure hunt for archetypes. They can comb cartoons and newspaper, magazine, and television advertising for contemporary examples of the following: the Earth Mother, the Hero, the Child, the Wise Old

Man. Organize these into collages or booklets (the television examples can be done in original art work), complete with captions or headings.

8. Have students discuss the connotation of the word *jilting*. Is it a term that applies to both sexes, or is it considered more appropriate for women? Are men more often thought of as the jilters or the jiltees? Discussion might focus on television sitcoms, movies, and books that they have read or on their personal experiences.

Guide for Reading

Distribute copies of the Guide for Reading and ask students to read them before they read the story. They should be reminded to be prepared with notebooks in which to record details of their reading pertinent to the discussion that will follow reading the story.

Postreading Activities

1. Use students' responses to questions in the Guide for Reading as the basis for a discussion of the story.
2. Have students make two charts showing the events in the story. On the first chart have students show the events as they would be presented if the story were told in chronological order. Begin with Granny as a young girl and end with her on her deathbed.

In the second chart have them show the events in the order in which they are presented in the story. Begin with Granny being examined by Doctor Harry and end with Granny blowing out the light. Students should be able to discuss the effectiveness of presenting the events of the story in the order that they appear on the second chart (Hodgins and Silverman 566).

3. Set up the following scenario for students: Granny Weatherall has died. Her children find her will, her diary, and the letters written to her by George and by John. Divide the class into groups and assign certain documents for each group to compose. In preparing the drafts, students should try to shed some light on why Granny was jilted by George, why the jilting represented such an insurmountable burden for her, and how she really felt about her life and her children.

4. Cornelia's attempts at being the good daughter to no avail are redolent of tales that contain evil mother figures—Snow White's and Cinderella's wicked stepmothers and Psyche's jealous mother-in-law, Venus, for example. Assign students to research and illustrate these tales and any others that contain evil mother figures as examples of the punishing mother archetype. Have

them determine if there is any analogy in these tales to the situation between Granny and her daughter Cornelia.

5. Have students read and discuss Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death." Then have them make two columns on a piece of paper and list as many similarities and differences between the images and ideas Dickinson uses in her poem and those used by Porter to describe the experience of dying. In paragraphs of about 200 words, they should explain the similarities and differences in the attitudes of the two authors on the subject.

6. It is not unusual for people to write their own obituaries before they die. Ask students to pretend that they are Granny and write a draft of an obituary that she might write for herself. Next, ask them to write Granny's obituary as if they were one of her remaining children.

7. Show the PBS film version of Porter's story. Compare the director's handling of the motif of light and darkness with Porter's in the written version of the story. Have students write a brief essay explaining which version is more effective.

8. Have students conduct interviews with a woman over the age of 70. What kinds of decisions about her life was she permitted to

make? What options was she given about the direction her life would take? How would her life have been different had she had additional choices? Ideally, students should interview their own grandparents, whose lives would have immediate effects on their own lives. Interviews might be done as oral journals or as videotapes.

9. Have students design a quilt representing Granny—a pictorial history of her life in a traditional artistic manner, using materials of their own choosing.

Evaluation

1. In speaking of Katherine Anne Porter's work, the author Eudora Welty said that the

> moment of recognition for a character comes often while the character is alone—the most alone in her life. Often the revelation that pierces a person's mind and heart and shows her life or her death comes in a dream, in retrospect, in illness, or in utter defeat, the moment of dying. (31-32)

In a well developed essay, discuss how Welty's statement applies to the character of Granny.

2. As Granny reviews her life, she cries, "Oh, no. Oh, God, no, there was something else besides the house and the man and

the children. Oh, surely they were not all?" As Granny's clinical psychologist or her confessor, write your notes and observations in which you evaluate her true feelings about her life based on her final words.

3. Trace Porter's use of light and dark and color imagery throughout the story. Write an analysis of the main character—her personality and her life—based on Porter's use of imagery. You should consider the juxtaposition of the darks of moods symbolizing death and unhappiness and the lights of objects which signify life.

4. In a formal essay, discuss Porter's development of Granny Weatherall as the Earth Mother archetype through references to food, farming and harvest, and children.

5. In a formal essay, explain how Porter's use of irony allows the reader to see through Granny Weatherall's deceiving exterior into the troubled and unhappy individual beneath. Be sure to consider the following statements:

   A. "It was good to be strong enough for everything."
   B. "I'm on my feet now, morally speaking."
   C. "Granny felt easy about her soul."

D. "Such a fresh breeze blowing and such a green day with no threats in it."

6. Read Emily Dickinson's "My Life Closed Twice" and "I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died." Write a formal comparison/contrast essay to show that a case can be made for maintaining that Katherine Anne Porter was influenced by Dickinson in her writing of "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall."

Related Works

1. *The Awakening* (Kate Chopin). This novel traces the devastating effects that male and female stereotyping in our society has on the main character and ends with her tragic death.

2. "When the Bough Breaks" (Elizabeth Enright). In this Faulkner-esque story, an elderly woman and children are confronted with and confined by societal expectations of women. While the young protagonist undergoes her rite of passage, the question is posed about the difference between the ways males and females perceive the world.

3. "Miss Brill" (Katherine Mansfield). This short story is told from a point of view submerged in the psyche of the main character, an elderly woman who tries to build a life from her imagination. She attempts to

protect herself from the harsh reality of her own life, but in one epiphanic moment she is confronted with the truth.

4. "I Stand Here Ironing" (Tillie Olsen). Through an interior monologue, a mother reviews her relationship with her daughter, reflecting the idea that individuals are not helpless, passive victims of life.

5. "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (Dylan Thomas). The poet, confronted with the imminent death of his father, pleads with the old man to "rage against the dying of the light."

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Guide for Reading

"The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"

1. In your notebook, keep a list of the events of Granny's life in the order in which she relates them.

2. Be prepared to discuss the importance of flashback and to draw a simple timeline illustrating the actual chronology of events in Granny's life.

3. Because Granny's story is not told in chronological order, read carefully, recording the following information in your notebook:

    A. How old was Granny when she was jilted the first time? How did she revolt against that jilting?

    B. How many children does Granny have? What are their names?

4. Note your observations about Granny's relationship with her children, Hapsy and Cornelia in particular. Why does she prefer Hapsy? Why does she dislike Cornelia?

5. Look for reasons that the main character is called Granny. Note that her memories are of her children and not of her grandchildren.

6. Granny might be considered compulsive/obsessive, particularly in her concern for order. List examples in your notebook of how this need for order is manifested, and be thinking about reasons for this obsessiveness.

7. What does Granny expect as death approaches? What things that are still undone bother her?
8. Granny describes the process of her own dying in metaphors. Record examples of these metaphors in your journal.
9. The story contains repeated references to darkness and to light. Record these in your journal for later discussion and, possibly, for writing assignments.
10. Watch Granny carefully, noting your ideas about what Granny gained or lost by keeping her feelings about George secret or repressed.
11. Keeping in mind the definition of archetypal figures, record the qualities and examples of behavior that establish Granny as an archetypal figure.
12. Most of the prominent figures in Granny's life are male. Be prepared to describe her relationships with these men.
13. Make a list in your journal of examples of statements, objects, or events that seem to be ironical or paradoxical.
14. At the end of the story, Granny Weatherall feels that she has been jilted a second time. By whom? How is this second jilting related to the first?

Of Mice And Men[1]

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Overview

Critical Commentary. John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* has several characteristics that make it an unforgettable study for both the teacher and the student. It is a brief novel with crisp characters and direct and forceful themes. It contains a richness of detail and a seriousness of subject matter that can challenge even the brightest student. The novel is structured very tightly. Its list of characters is small, and each person is easily distinguishable in manner and temperament. The novel's language is simple and easily grasped, yet the plot will keep students wondering what is going to happen next. *Of Mice and*

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[1] Norma Wyckoff, Bethel, Alaska, was a contributor to the original manuscript upon which this guide was based.

Men brings to life an exceptionally vivid cast of characters and develops a number of profound and universal issues. Thematically, the novel can be a catalyst for extensive discussions of such issues as the relative importance of intelligence, the need for friendship, and the place of dreams and goals in human life. *Of Mice and Men* lends itself especially well to three critical approaches: neo-Aristotelian, New Criticism, and archetypal. In this teaching guide, the primary critical approach used will be neo-Aristotelian in order to examine the effective structure and the character relationships which have made Steinbeck's novel widely read and taught.

The effect created by a literary work is one of the major concerns of neo-Aristotelian criticism. Readers of *Of Mice and Men* are drawn to George and his burden of caring for the retarded Lennie. As George and Lennie strive to reach their impossible dream of living "off the fatta the lan'," they are constantly confronted by obstacles resulting from Lennie's retardation and giant-sized body. The reader cannot help but pity George as he continually protects and defends Lennie. Likewise, we must pity Lennie, whose child-like mind and conflicting super-human strength lead him to destroy things he admires and loves: the girl's red dress, the mice, the puppy, Curley's wife, and ultimately George and their dream. Their shattered dream confirms people's fear that as they work diligently to attain success and happiness, as Lennie and

George do, they too might reap only "pain and grief for promised joy" (Robert Burns, "To a Mouse").

Examination of the novel's structure is basic to the neo-Aristotelian approach. Steinbeck draws a tightly structured picture of the progression of George and Lennie's tragedy as he comes full circle in the development of his novel. Beginning with the peaceful setting at the riverside, Steinbeck builds a microcosm where George and Lennie experience feelings of joy, hope, disillusionment, and tragedy. Close scrutiny of the world of nature, the world of the bunkhouse, and the world of the barn confirms the progression of the failing dream. In contrast to the serene and tranquil setting at the river in Chapter 1, Steinbeck goes full circle in Chapter 6 as he returns readers to the same clearing, but this time to a setting filled with shadows and images of death.

Character analysis in the neo-Aristotelian realm causes us to label George as the tragic hero of the novel. George's nobility manifests itself in his generosity, his looking after the helpless Lennie. George's mistaken idea that he and Lennie can accomplish their dream and his inability to recognize Lennie's limitations in the real world are the defects or flaws that lead to George's downfall. Although defeated by the total deterioration of the dream (Lennie's death), George gains a measure of self-awareness when he realizes that Lennie cannot function in a normal world.

Universal themes in *Of Mice and Men* provide a basis for considering the text as New Critics. The predominant themes that Steinbeck develops are loneliness/isolation and friendship/companionship. A number of the characters in the novel struggle with the fear of loneliness and isolation: Lennie is willing to live alone in a cave, Candy is lonely after the death of his dog, Crooks is isolated in his room in the barn, Curley's wife is isolated from the world, and George will surely suffer loneliness after Lennie's death. The strongest force that Steinbeck uses to combat loneliness is friendship and companionship. Candy, Crooks, and Curley's wife continually seek an end to loneliness through companionship. On the other hand, George and Lennie find strength in companionship and friendship that helps maintain them as they pursue their dream. In developing his themes, Steinbeck uses such symbols as the game of solitaire and the name of the town, Soledad, in addition to many others. The New Critic would also emphasize imagery and tone. For example, comparison of the quiet, peaceful opening scene of Chapter 1 and the shadowy, death-filled aura of the last chapter gives young readers an opportunity to observe how Steinbeck establishes images and tone.

Potential for Teaching. Bantam, the publisher of the paperback edition of *Of Mice and Men,* indicates that the novel has a fifth grade readability level. However, because of the nature of the complex character relationships, the ages of the protagonists, the tragic ending, and potentially offensive language, the novel might be better suited for high school students in grades ten through twelve. The novel lends itself to instruction of a wide range of achievement levels. Depending upon the teacher's purpose, the novel might be taught to honor or advanced students in grade ten or to students on any achievement level in grades eleven and twelve.

The themes of friendship and striving for goals or dreams are very important in the lives of today's teenagers. Thus, *Of Mice and Men* offers a unique opportunity for young readers to explore their own goals and their relationships to their peers. The necessity to set goals and to work toward the attainment of those goals despite occasional failure is a theme which makes *Of Mice and Men* a beneficial study for adolescents.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. Although *Of Mice and Men* is often referred to as a timeless novel, today's students probably need an understanding of the age of the homeless, migrant farm workers of the West. Through a prereading discussion of the homeless in America today, the students can be led to relate to an understanding of migrant workers who fled to the West. Another challenge for today's readers might be Steinbeck's use of profane language. By prefacing the reading assignment with a description of life in a ranch bunkhouse, the teacher should be able to minimize the impact of potentially offensive language and to direct the students' attention to the relationships among the workers on the ranch.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying *Of Mice and Men,* the students will be able to . . .

Neo-Aristotelian

1. understand the structure of the novel through its six main episodes
2. relate how decisions made at pivotal points in the novel affect the outcome
3. describe how characters reveal themselves through their words and actions
4. identify George (or Lennie) as the hero of the novel
5. discuss the place of dreams and goals in human life

New Criticism

6. identify and trace the themes of dreams, loneliness and companionship/friendship
7. identify symbols in the novel that support the theme of loneliness
8. identify tone and tonal shift
9. recognize images and recurring motifs and their relationships to the text's characters and themes

Prereading Activities

1. Explain or review the concept of the plot pyramid and its components (i.e., exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement), relating each to a novel, play, or television drama that is familiar to the class. Ask students to relate the events in the novel to the pyramid as they read.

2. Ask students to identify the mood that is evoked in the first three pages of the novel by having them list adjectives and phrases that establish the mood. Discuss the effect of the mood as it is applied to the exposition component of the pyramid. Ask students to consider these questions as they read: Is the mood consistent in the novel? If the mood changes, cite the passage(s) where the mood shifts. Why does the mood shift at that particular point?

3. Have students read pages 1–3 (Bantam paperback edition) and the first paragraph of dialogue. Students should list the contrasting physical traits for each man and note the commanding qualities of George as the leader as opposed to his opposite, Lennie. Ask the students to keep the following questions in mind as they read:

    A. What do you consider heroic qualities?
    B. What actions or attributes constitute heroic behavior?
    C. Which man exhibits these behaviors?

D. Must all heroes be successful? Explain.

E. Can a hero have a flaw, weakness, or fault? Explain.

4. Divide the class into small groups. Each group should use the following questions to direct a group discussion:

A. How important is friendship?

B. To what lengths should one friend go for another?

C. Has anyone in the group ever moved into a new school? How did you feel before you made friends?

D. What if you were totally alone with no parents and no place that you could call home? How would you feel? Elaborate.

E. What conclusions can you draw from our discussion on the importance of human companionship?

Tell students to keep in mind what has been said in their group discussions as they continue to read. They should keep in mind the idea of loneliness and think about who in this story is lonely. Students should be able to describe actions which take place because of a character's loneliness.

5. Ask students, "If you knew you would be granted the fulfillment of three dreams, what would be your three dreams?" (Students might respond with dreams of wealth, success, happiness, owning land or a house, independence, self-worth, etc.) The responses might be listed in

journals and then be categorized by groups of students or by the whole class. Ask the students to keep the following questions in mind as they read:

- A. Why do George, Lennie, and other characters dream and fantasize?
- B. What results from their dreams?
- C. How can the accomplishment or defeat of any person's dream make him a success or a failure?

6. Bring to class a painting, a picture from a magazine, or any other artwork that might evoke some kind of sensory response. Ask students to tell what they see in the picture, what they hear, what they taste, what they smell, and what or how they feel toward the picture's representation. This activity will help students grasp the idea of images represented in art.
   - A. With a definition of imagery in mind, students should read Chapter 1 of the novel. As they read, students should copy images of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste as they encounter them. Students should compare their lists of images with their classmates'.
   - B. Students should bring pictures, drawings, or other works of art to class to exemplify their understanding of imagery.

7. After students have read the first chapter, ask these questions to prepare students for other images in the novel:

   A. What sensory images does Steinbeck use in the first two paragraphs? What mood or tone do these images evoke? Be alert for a similar scene later in the novel.

   B. What animal images are associated with Lennie? Of what importance are these images?

   C. What adjectives and verbs does Steinbeck use to describe Lennie in this chapter?

Guides for Reading

Guide for Reading #1, at the end of this unit, is a sociogram designed to help students understand character relationships in the novel. After reading Chapter 3, students might be asked to group the characters and to examine their relationships to one another. Students might repeat this activity after completing the novel to see if they have made any changes in their grouping. Of course, the activity sheet can also be used in an open class discussion after the students have completed the novel.

Guide for Reading #2 was designed to assist students in understanding setting, character, and action in the novel and in predicting upcoming events. That Guide assumes that the novel has been divided into three sections for study: Section I (Chapters 1–2), Section II (Chapters 3–4), and Section III (Chapters 5–6). Students' responses to questions on this Guide should contribute to the quality of small group or class discussion of each section.

Postreading Activities

The following questions and activities might be used to structure discussion of the novel:

1. Have students make a "dream chart" and mark appropriate sections in order to help them see the structure of the "best laid plans" theme. Discuss how the "dream chart" reflects the dramatic structure of the novel. Plot the structure and discuss how the structure leads to the dramatic effect at the end.

DREAM CHART							
CHARACTER	THE DREAM	1	2	3	4	5	6
LENNIE							
GEORGE							
CROOKS							
CURLEY'S WIFE							
CANDY							
+ dream envisioned, positive images - interference, negative images							

2. Have each student develop a plot pyramid in which he or she charts rising action to the point of climax and the falling action to the denouement. Compare the details, especially the climax of the novel.

3. Compare and contrast Lennie's and George's roles in the novel. Review students' concepts of what constitutes a hero. Help students to draw conclusions about heroic characteristics and ask the class to respond to these questions: Is Lennie or George the hero of this story? Is either one "successful"? What does the answer to the previous question say about contemporary heroes? This could lead to a discussion of the "heroic paradox."

4. Conduct a mock trial of George. Divide the class into judge, lawyers, jury, witnesses (characters in the story), and audience. Let students write the script and determine George's fate. Students may wish to have Lennie's voice from the grave react to George's sentence as the trial closes.

5. Give students a typed copy of the lyrics of "The Impossible Dream" by Joe Darion. Have them read the lyrics silently. As they read, ask them to look for descriptive words or phrases that remind them of George, Lennie, and their dream. If a recording of the song is available, students might enjoy listening to it in class. (A copy of the lyrics is included in the Appendix.)

6. Reemphasize these questions: (A) Why do people dream? (B) What happens to dreams in *Of Mice and Men*? (C) Use the accomplishment or defeat of a character's dream to serve as the basis for a statement of theme for the novel.

7. To reinforce the discussion of images, use the following questions as a guide:

    A. How do the animal images associated with Lennie in Chapter 1 change as you progress through the novel, especially in Chapters 4, 5, and 6?

    B. What sensory images does Steinbeck use in the last chapter? Compare and contrast these images to the sensory images in Chapter 1. How has the mood or tone changed in this chapter compared with the similar scene in the first chapter?

    C. Based on Lennie's actions and words, do you think that Lennie can or cannot live in a human world? Why does he kill the mouse, the puppy, and Curley's wife?

    D. Look closely at the dialogue that Lennie has with the visions of Aunt Clara and the giant rabbit (page 112). What does the dialogue indicate about his feelings for what he has done? (Suggested response: Lennie feels no guilt for what he has done because he does not realize the weight of his actions.) What conclusion can you draw here about Lennie's human or animal nature? (Suggested response: Because Lennie feels no guilt in killing the puppy or Curley's wife, we may conclude that he lacks a conscience, one of the things which separates humans from animals.)

8. Let students write their own three-act dramatic presentation of the novel. Divide the class into three groups, one for each act, and let each group write its script. If video equipment is available, let students tape the production. Student groups might then discuss why they did or did not emphasize certain scenes or details within scenes. Each group should defend its character portrayals. A discussion of heroic or non-heroic representation may be stimulated by this activity.

9. Debate George's intentions when he killed Lennie. Was George's act murder or was it mercy? To prepare the class for a modified debate, the following activities should be accomplished:

   A. Have students read the excerpt from Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol" included in the Appendix and discuss the following questions:

      (1) What is Wilde's message in these lines?

      (2) Apply Wilde's idea to *Of Mice and Men*. Is the poem parallel to George's killing Lennie in the novel? If so,

how? Was George a brave man or was he a coward? Explain.

B. Give each student a copy of Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem "How Annandale Went Out." (See Appendix.) After reading the poem, discuss the following questions:

(1) Who or what was Annandale?

(2) Who is the speaker in the poem?

(3) What is the speaker's relationship with Annandale?

(4) In what four roles does the speaker know Annandale?

(5) Why does Robinson call Annandale an "apparatus"?

(6) What was Annandale's condition?

(7) What is the effect of the poet's repeating ". . . and I was there"?

(8) In stanza 2, why do you think poet asks us to put the "two together"—the ruin and the man?

(9) Why or how is the narrator ". . . on the spot"?

(10) What is ". . . a slight kind of engine" that is referred to in the next to the last line?

(11) Why does the speaker ask, "You wouldn't hang me?"

(12) What is the poet proposing in this poem?

C. Divide the class into two groups; do not let them choose their group. One group will work with the resolution, Resolved: George was a murderer. The other group will work with the resolution, Resolved: George killed Lennie as an act of mercy. Each group should discuss the resolution it has been assigned. Each student's responsibility is to support his team's resolution and to find evidence to defeat the other team's resolution. Give the students class time to prepare their arguments. Allow at least one period for the actual debate. The debate can be as formal or as informal as you choose.

10. Write an epilogue for *Of Mice and Men*. As you address your audience you might consider the following:

    A. Was George arrested?

    B. Did Curley get revenge on George because George did not wait for Curley to kill Lennie?

    C. Did George take Candy and Crooks and go to live on the "little place" that he and Lennie had dreamed of owning?

    D. Where was George 25 years after Lennie's death, and what was he doing?

11. Rewrite the scene in the barn between Curley's wife and Lennie. Instead of having Lennie kill her, allow Curley's wife to live. In rewriting this episode, consider the following:

    A. Would the ending of the novel change? If so, how?

    B. Would the rewritten ending be realistic?

    C. Would the story be as effective if the ending changed? Why or why not?

Evaluation

Students' success in fulfilling instructional objectives might be determined in part by assigning some of the following evaluation activities:

1. Describe Lennie by focusing on his behavior and actions as they relate to Steinbeck's emphasis on animal imagery. How does his ultimate tragedy relate to this imagery?

2. Write an interpretation of the excerpt of Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol" in the Appendix and relate it to *Of Mice and Men*.

3. In either whole-class discussion or small groups, discuss *Of Men and Mice* as an allegory of the Genesis 4 story of Cain and Abel. Respond specifically to Cain's attitude, "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" Apply the allegory to modern human life and the extent to which humans are responsible for their fellow humans.

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4. In a response journal entry, react to this statement: "No man is an island entire unto himself." Use details from the novel to develop your answer.

5. Make a collage to represent the value of human companionship.

6. Curley's wife is the most anonymous figure in the novel, yet she has a direct connection to Lennie and George's dream. In an essay, characterize Curley's wife, explain her role in the novel, and explain her significance to George and Lennie's dream.

7. In a small group, construct an essay response to one of the following topics:

   A. Discuss how the title of the novel relates to Lennie.

   B. Discuss what symbolic meanings *men* and *mice* can have.

   C. Discuss the implications of Lennie's last name to his role in the novel and to Steinbeck's title.

8. In an essay, relate how Lennie fits into Steinbeck's theme of mankind being only a small part (microcosm) of the larger natural world (macrocosm).

9. Compare Steinbeck's hero and his behavior in this novel to a modern hero from either a recent movie or television show.

10. Apply the plot pyramid to another story by Steinbeck (e.g., "Flight") or by another appropriate author.

11. In a small group, examine one of the microcosms in the novel: the world of nature, the world of the bunkhouse, the world of the barn, or the world of Lennie and George's dream farm. By examining Steinbeck's choice of words and sentence structure, characterize the microcosm and the tone which Steinbeck uses to describe it. Each group will present its findings to the class; then the whole class will discuss the effect of tonal shift on plot development.

Related Reading

Students who enjoyed *Of Mice and Men* might also consider reading these works:

1. "To a Mouse" (Robert Burns). The poem which inspired the title of *Of Mice and Men*. The poem implies that humans, like mice, often pursue plans and dreams that are unattainable. As a result, instead of experiencing joy and rewards, humans must deal with disappointment, pain, and sorrow.
2. *Beaches* (Iris Rainer Dart). The moving story of an extraordinary friendship that stands the test of time much as Lennie and George's friendship did. The novel is a contemporary best-seller adapted for a major motion picture that should motivate even the most reluctant reader.

3. *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald). The story of the gold-hatted lover, Jay Gatsby, whose quest for his dream girl, Daisy Buchanan, led to his tragic end. Set in the 1920's, the novel endeavors to present the American scene between World War I and the depression.

4. Genesis 4, *Holy Bible*. Genesis 4 is the story of two brothers, Cain and Abel, who were commanded to make sacrifices to the Lord. When Abel's sacrifice was more pleasing than Cain's, Cain killed Abel. When God questioned Cain about Abel, his response was "Am I my brother's keeper?" As punishment for Abel's death, Cain was made to wander the earth. Cain and Abel serve as parallels to George and Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*.

5. "Wind Beneath My Wings" (Larry Henley and Jeff Silbar). The fact that George is the sustaining factor in Lennie's life is clearly reflected in this song. Just as the speaker looks up to a hero, whom he always stays one step behind, Lennie follows George, trying to imitate his every move. As the song also suggests, "I know the truth; I would be nothing without you"; likewise, Lennie's survival depends totally upon George's leadership.

6. *Le Morte d'Arthur* (Sir Thomas Malory). Sir Galahad's search for the Holy Grail has been paralleled in many pieces of modern literature. According to the legend, finding the Grail—the cup Jesus drank from—

would cause the finder's sins to be forgiven. The Grail serves as a symbol of that which is sought but can never be possessed. Once Galahad touched the Grail, he died and his spirit went to heaven. George and Lennie's quest for a place to live "off the fat of the land" is symbolic of the search for the Holy Grail.

7. *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Steinbeck). The story of the Joad family, who set out for California as migrant farmers in the 1930's, searching for work and survival. This sad but realistic story reflects the sense of loneliness and desperation many Americans felt during the era.

8. "The Origin of Tularecito" (John Steinbeck). The short story of an untamed boy who, when sent to school, is beaten until he behaves like a normal boy. Tularecito never does become normal but always strikes back fiercely. It is conjectured that Lennie's character in *Of Mice and Men* is based upon the character of Tularecito.

9. *The Glass Menagerie* (Tennessee Williams). A drama that focuses on the desperation of its characters, *The Glass Menagerie* is an intense drama of conflict. Amanda Wingfield dwells in the glamour of her past while trying to procure a gentleman caller for her shy, crippled daughter Laura, who shelters herself in a fragile world of tiny glass animals. Amanda's son, Tom, escapes from the boredom of his life by drinking and attending movies. The three must face reality after a failed attempt

to match Laura with a former high school classmate who now works with Tom. Theme and symbolism make this play an excellent companion work for *Of Mice and Men*.

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Guide for Reading #1

Sociogram for *Of Mice and Men*

Character Relationships

DIRECTIONS:

Put yourself in the place of the person whose name appears in each of the boxes below. Knowing what you know about this character (feelings, attitudes, likes, and dislikes), what other characters would you choose to share the dream or to be your companion(s)? You may choose as many as three other characters to go in each group although you do not have to choose that many. You may choose a different number of people for each character.

Be ready to defend your choice of companions. Why did you place them the way you did? What do they have in common?

Of the remaining characters, which one(s) would you consider as choices and why?

In the central box place the character(s) whose name(s) appear in every group. Why do you think this character appears in every group?

George

Lennie

Crooks

Slim

Guide for Reading #2

Of Mice and Men

Section I (Chapters 1 and 2)

SETTING

1. Make a list of adjectives and adjective phrases that suggest the atmosphere of the scene by the river.
2. Compare the opening and closing paragraphs of Chapter 1. What is the effect of each?
3. Compare the opening paragraph of Chapter 2 to that of Chapter 1. How are they different in purpose? How is Steinbeck's purpose reflected in both style and content of each paragraph?

CHARACTERS

1. How do George and Lennie respond to the atmosphere created in the scene at the river? Select details from Chapter 1 to illustrate your answer.
2. George and Lennie talk mainly about their dream or plan. Compare and contrast each man's attitude toward the dream.
3. List the conflicts evident in Chapter 2 and the characters involved in each conflict.

ACTION

1. Contrast George's and Lennie's reactions to Curley's wife. How does Steinbeck characterize their reactions by their manner of speech?
2. How does Candy's dog fit into Chapter 2? Cite parallel situations or characters.

PREDICTION

What predictions can you make about upcoming events?

Section II (Chapters 3 and 4)

SETTING

1. What contrasting images does Steinbeck use in opening Chapter 3? What does he imply by incorporating these contrasts?
2. Where is Chapter 4 set? What is significant about this setting as compared to the bunkhouse setting?

CHARACTERS

1. Explain the source of conflict between Candy and Carlson in Chapter 3. Also explain the conflict's resolution.
2. Why do you think Candy and Crooks want to be a part of George and Lennie's dream?
3. Characterize Crooks. What do you think his role is in the novel?
4. What is Curley's wife's attitude toward Curley? What purpose does Curley's wife seem to have in this story?

ACTION

1. Why is the conflict between Candy and Carlson important in Chapter 3? Could this episode be a foreshadowing technique? If so, what do you think lies ahead?
2. Describe Lennie's fight with Curley. What does the fight show about Lennie's dependence upon George?
3. Thoroughly describe George's image of "livin' off the fatta of the lan'" in Chapter 3. To what extent is this a realistic dream for George and Lennie at this time?
4. In Chapter 4, what happens to Candy, Crooks, and Lennie when Curley's wife confronts them? Does it seem strange to you that she is after Lennie? Explain.
5. How does George react when he discovers that Lennie and Candy have shared the dream with Crooks? What could explain George's attitude?
6. Have your feelings changed toward any characters after reading Chapter 4? If so, toward which characters? Explain. Does realization of the dream seem closer or farther away at the end of Chapter 4?

PREDICTION

What do the characters' actions and relationships foreshadow in these chapters?

Section III (Chapters 5 and 6)

SETTING

1. The setting for Chapter 5 is still the barn, but in Chapter 6 the setting makes a full circle to where we began in Chapter 1. Even though Steinbeck takes us back to the banks of the Salinas River, the atmosphere has changed. Compare and contrast the atmosphere in Chapter 6 and the atmosphere in Chapter 1. Explain any images of death that are mentioned.

CHARACTERS

1. What three emotions does Lennie experience after he kills his puppy?
2. What one emotion does Lennie not experience that one would usually experience at such a time?
3. What information do we get in Chapter 5 about Curley's wife and her relationship with Curley?
4. What trait of Curley's wife has brought her to the barn?
5. Throughout the book and especially in Chapter 5, what has Lennie done when he is in a state of panic?
6. After the death of Curley's wife, what harsh realization does George imply to Candy?
7. What does Curley's reaction to his wife's death show about his character?

8. What does George's action in Chapter 6 cause you to conclude about George's feelings for Lennie? Is George heroic? Explain.

MAJOR ACTIONS

1. Explain the two major confrontations Lennie experiences in Chapter 5.
2. What happens to the outward appearance of Curley's wife as she lies dead in the barn?
3. How does George describe his future to Candy?
4. What is Curley's reaction to his wife's death?
5. Describe Lennie's two visions in Chapter 6 and explain their implications.
6. When George finds Lennie at the riverbank, instead of verbally attacking Lennie, what does George tell Lennie?
7. Why do you think George lied when Carlson asked George if Lennie had his gun?
8. What effect do Carlson's last words have on you?

CONCLUSION

What major theme or themes do you see running through the novel?

Appendix

from *Ballad of Reading Gaol*

Oscar Wilde

Each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard
The coward does it with a kiss
The brave man with a sword.

The Impossible Dream

(The Quest)

Lyrics: Joe Darion

To dream the impossible dream,
To fight the unbeatable foe,
To bear with unbearable sorrow,
To run where the brave dare not go,
To right the unrightable wrong,
To love pure and chaste from afar,
To try when your arms are too weary,
To reach the unreachable star!
This is my quest,
To follow that star,

No matter how hopeless,

No matter how far;

To fight for the right without question or pause,

To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause!

And I know if I'll only be true

To this glorious quest,

That my heart will be peaceful and calm,

When I'm laid to my rest,

And the world will be better for this;

That one man, scorned and covered with scars,

Still strove with his last ounce of courage,

To reach the unreachable stars.

How Annandale Went Out

Edwin Arlington Robinson

"They called it Annandale-and I was there

To flourish, to find words, and to attend:

Liar, physician, hypocrite, and friend,

I watched him; and the sight was not so fair

As one or two that I had seen elsewhere:

An apparatus not for me to mend—

A wreck, with hell between him and the end,
Remained of Annandale; and I was there.

"I knew the ruin as I knew the man;
So put the two together, if you can,
Remembering the worst you know of me.
Now view yourself as I was, on the spot,
With a slight kind of engine. Do you see?
Like this . . . You wouldn't hang me? I thought not."

"A Worn Path"

Eudora Welty

Ronda Ramsey Foster

Hixson High School

Hixson, Tennessee

> Only birth can conquer death—the birth, not of the old thing again, but of something new. Within the soul, within the body social, there must be—if we are to experience long survival—a continuous 'recurrence of birth' (palingenesia) to nullify the unremitting recurrences of death.
>
> —Joseph Campbell
>
> *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

Overview

Critical Commentary. With "A Worn Path" Eudora Welty issues a life-affirming manifesto. Centering on the themes of human endurance and immortality, Welty's short story celebrates life's journey. Covering the span of a day, it is the record of a mission of love and renewal. Rich in symbols and mythological allusions, "A Worn Path" lends itself well to archetypal criticism. Myths are road maps of the psyche, giving concrete form to the fears and wishes of the people and cultures that create them. Myths give order and structure to shape human experiences and to charge them with meaning. Although sometimes labeled as a local color author or a writer of the "village" genre, Welty transcends these tags of regionalism to address ageless concerns: What is immortality? How does one defy death?

One motif in archetypal criticism is the spiritual quest. Rhythms taken from the natural world—the solar cycle, the seasonal cycle, and the organic cycle of human life—are reflected in the overarching archetype, the death-rebirth theme. As the name of Welty's protagonist implies, Phoenix signifies regeneration and the triumph of life over death. Seeking her way with tapping umbrella, Phoenix is a pilgrim on the road—through the labyrinth back to re-creation. The first step in a quest is the call to adventure which "rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration—a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth" (Campbell 51). Typical of this call is a dark forest, a great tree, a spring, and the lowly appearance of the hero. These symbols are all embedded in "A Worn Path."

Phoenix herself conforms to archetypal images, but her complexity does not allow one to reduce her to a mere stereotype. Phoenix can be seen as both the Great Mother—embodying the mysteries of life, death, and transformation—and the woman as hero (Guerin 160). The positive aspects of the Great Mother apply to Phoenix; she is associated with birth, life, growth, warmth, and protection. As an aging woman, Phoenix no longer fits the traditional heroine roles and thus is freed to be heroic. She transcends her limiting situation. Phoenix also serves as a hero because her "position reflects typically or emblematically the situation of everyman" (Pearson and Pope 12). "A Worn Path" can be read as a dramatization of the search for eternal life. Like the hero in numerous variations of the monomyth (a term taken by Joseph Campbell from *Finnegan's Wake* to refer to the rites of passage—separation, initiation, and return—that lead to transformation and redemption [Campbell 30]), Phoenix is unrecognized, even rejected. Nevertheless, just as the male Hero Warrior is "the champion of creative life" and "not of things become but of things becoming" (Campbell 337), so Phoenix is not deterred on her journey.

After accepting the call, the hero moves into a dream landscape where she must survive numerous trials. Joseph Campbell notes, "The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination" (109). Phoenix's path runs up a hill, where she is caught by thorns and threatened by the hunter, death, but on she walks. Reaching her destination, Phoenix secures medicine for her grandson. Swaddled in a quilt, waiting alone, suffering, the grandson is the Hero-child—the potential future of the Great Mother. Having survived her trials and accomplished her great deed, Phoenix brings a Christmas gift of a paper windmill. Evocative of the sun and spiritual illumination, the circular windmill is the archetypal image of the mandala. Perhaps a greater gift than the medicine, the mandala serves as an aid to induce contemplation and to encourage "the spirit to move forward along its path of evolution from. . . the realm of corporeal forms to the spiritual" (Cirlot 199).

Phoenix's spiritual quest, symbolic of life's journey, is mirrored in the archetypal pattern of seasonal cycles. At the inception of "A Worn Path," morning dawns as Phoenix's journey begins. Although the day is not exhausted, the trip is long. With night, death stalks Phoenix, but rebirth also awaits her in the form of her grandson, the Hero-child.

The short story begins with the words "It was December." Appropriate to the winter season, death imagery appears throughout "A Worn Path." Yet, just as winter represents the genre, irony, so it is ironical that the season also represents eternal life through the evocation of the Christmas motif. Winter, an archetypal representative of the time when one's actuality is furthest from one's desires, is also in the Christmas tradition a time of goodwill and charity.

The archetypal approach to criticism is not alone in requiring a close textual reading. New Criticism also demands it. A mythological approach seeks to find universalities in images; a New Critical approach seeks the specific and particular. Nevertheless, both approaches represent the underlying conviction that art restores the unity of mind that modern life and science have fragmented. Although most often applied to poetry, New Criticism does have application to "A Worn Path," which is constructed with rich images that lend to the thematic unity.

Flight imagery abounds in "A Worn Path"—from the allusion to the mythological bird, the phoenix, to the description of the grandson as a young bird, peeping, "holding his mouth open like a little bird." In opposition to the symbols of spiritual longing, earthbound birds, such as the buzzard and the hunter's bagged bobwhites, represent death and decay.

Another dominant image is embodied in Phoenix. The sun incarnate, Phoenix is described as being a "golden color" with ringlets that smelled like copper tied in a red, fire-like rag. Characterized as a sun goddess, she becomes a symbol of consciousness, creative energy, and the passage of time and life.

Additionally, the nobility with which Phoenix carries herself and the dignity of her character contribute to her elevated image. She is "a festival figure in some parade" who announces "'Here I be'" (an assertion echoing Yahweh's "I am") with a "ceremonial stiffness." Even Phoenix's wrinkles support the thematic concern of inexhaustible life. "A whole little tree" stands in the middle of her forehead, like the tree of life (growth) or the tree of knowledge (death). The latter is sometimes depicted showing signs of fire, the solar side of the Celtic double tree of life.

The sun imagery is countered by death and dying symbology. The landscape is strewn with dead trees, withered cottonfields, dead cornfields, a hollow dead man—the scarecrow—which was at first mistaken for a ghost. Phoenix defies death as she addresses its symbol, a buzzard, "'Who you watching?'"

Although much of the imagery surrounding Phoenix emphasizes her timelessness, ambiguity exists as well. With her trip to Natchez as "regular as clockwork" and steps balanced like the pendulum of a grandfather clock, Phoenix appears trapped, bounded by time. Pulled to her path, Phoenix repeats her journey ritualistically. When the nurse questions Phoenix, the implication is raised that perhaps the grandson is dead. There is no longer a purpose to her cycle. Regardless of the physical reality, Phoenix affirms the spiritual truth—"'He going to last.'"

As a final approach, reader response criticism would empower students to determine their own meanings. Moving from the allusions and images within the text, reader response would involve the student's private mythology. While New Criticism invests authority in the text, reader response criticism purports that meaning does not exist until the reader interacts with a text. This frees students (and teachers) to acknowledge a multiplicity of "correct" answers. More importantly, it encourages the formulation of questions. Although reader response criticism does not advocate imposing factual prereading questions, suggesting questions that focus the student on the effect of the text does provide guidance. Judith Fetterley offers the following questions to stimulate response to any story:

1. What happens in the story?
2. What did you feel when you read it?
3. What in your personal experience did the story call forth?
4. What is the most central image, word, or moment in the story?

While focusing on the experience of reading—on how the story affects the reader—the students can clarify their own conclusions about the work. In addition to recording their responses to the aforementioned questions in a journal, students can also include the textual evidence that helped shape their opinions. Reader response techniques foster ownership as students examine their experience with the text and reflect on the effect of the text on their lives.

Potential for Teaching. The brevity of "A Worn Path" both appeals to adolescent readers and lends itself well to common reading and class response. Since this story is frequently included in American literature anthologies, it is traditionally taught to eleventh graders. Advanced ninth and tenth graders, however, would not have difficulty with the reading. "A Worn Path" is a model short story for introducing archetypal symbols and motifs. Discussion of the protagonist, Phoenix, leads students to examine the quest theme and its relevance both to young and to old. An examination of "ageism" and our culture's responses to the aged is a natural outgrowth of the reading. At a time when students deeply want to belong to a group, the archetypal structure provides a sense of order, connections, and community. An awareness of the cyclical nature of life is increased. Tightly crafted and possessing only one central character, "A Worn Path" enables students to focus easily on the wealth of details. The skillful manner in which patterns of images construct theme enhances the teaching of analytical skills.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. The simplicity of its plot and its language make "A Worn Path" accessible to classes with a wide range of ability levels. However, students lacking background in archetypal images and motifs may have difficulty appreciating the symbolism and the allegorical significance of the story. The ambiguity created by the questionable existence of a grandson might be confusing for some readers.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying "A Worn Path," students will be able to. . .

Archetypal

1. identify archetypal figures in the story (e.g., the Great Mother, the Hero-child, the Hero as Warrior) and determine how characterization in the short story reflects archetypes
2. trace the quest motif in the story

3. identify historical and current examples of the Hero-child and the Great Mother

4. relate the archetypal Great Mother (Phoenix) or her journey to a similar figure or to a similar quest from their own experience

5. utilize the seasonal and organic cycles (birth-death-rebirth) as a means of analyzing theme in "A Worn Path" and in other texts

New Criticism

6. list details of the setting and explain how they contribute to the story's thematic unity

7. determine a central image of the story and justify their choice

Reader Response

8. employ reader response questions as a means of clarifying thoughts and as a means of reacting to the story

Other

9. recognize the literary devices used in the story (e.g., simile, metaphor, point of view) and their contribution to the story

Prereading Activities

1. To encourage the process of reader response, the teacher will read the first two sentences of "A Worn Path" aloud. Students will write impressions and predictions (for 5 to 10 minutes) about the character in their response journals. Allow time for students to share their

hypotheses about Phoenix. After reading the third sentence, in which the character is named, ask students to record whether or not their expectations changed in any way. Read aloud the remainder of the first four paragraphs. Ask students to suggest Phoenix's destination and the purpose of her journey.

2. To focus on the initiation and quest motifs, elicit examples of rites of passage from the students (e.g., getting one's driver's license, graduating from high school, becoming eighteen or twenty-one years old). Ask them to determine ways in which they are changed by these rituals.

3. After presenting the following quotation by Joseph Campbell, encourage the students to discuss its meaning and applicability to their lives and to modern life:

   > It is only those who know neither an inner call nor an outer doctrine whose plight truly is desperate; that is to say, most of us today, in this labyrinth without and within the heart. (23)

4. Acquaint students with archetypal figures, especially the Great Mother, the Hero-child, and the Hero as Warrior. Brainstorm together to create a list of modern figures who belong in each category. Discuss the traits and attributes of the modern characters that contribute to their being viewed as archetypes.

5. Discuss the myth of the phoenix and ask students to write predictions about the character in their response journals based upon their knowledge of this literary allusion.

6. Read "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. As a class, analyze the central figure, the traveler, as a pilgrim. Determine the implication of the line "The tide rises, the tide falls" and its relation to the organic cycle of life. Relate the solar cycle of the poem to its theme. Discuss the significance of the poem's setting, the seashore.

7. Examine the Marc Chagall painting *I and the Village*. Ask students to determine the setting depicted, discuss the symbols, and suggest a meaning for each.

8. Distribute copies of the Guide for Reading included at the end of this unit. Designed to better enable students to read closely, the Guide is intended to assist students with their examination of literary devices and with their analysis of the effect of the story on them as readers.

Postreading Activities

1. Chart Phoenix's quest, noting the trials she undergoes and the gifts (the boon) that Phoenix is securing for her grandson, the Hero-child.

2. Following the monomyth pattern delineated by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, create an original quest myth.

3. Create a collage or drawing that uses symbols to indicate the central image or mood of "A Worn Path" or another related literary work.

4. Compare and contrast the painting, *I and the Village*, with the short story, "A Worn Path," to demonstrate the use of symbolism in different media. Similarities might include the following:
   - A. the dream-like state of the central character
   - B. the rural setting
   - C. the image of a path leading to a village
   - D. the main figure's coloring (green) might correspond with Phoenix's name

5. Contrast the journey of the traveler in "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls" to the quest of Phoenix. How do the two differ? How is the imagery of the solar cycle employed differently?

6. Read Sylvia Ashton-Warner's short story entitled "The Phoenix." How does her reworking of the myth give it an ironic twist? Discuss other possible story lines that utilize the Phoenix as a central image.

7. The following topics for class discussion could lead to writing activities as well:
   - A. how images, character names (or lack of names) and descriptions, and settings contribute to the theme
   - B. how Phoenix typifies a sun goddess

    C. how Phoenix typifies a Great Mother
    D. how stereotypes differ from archetypes
    E. how society treats the aged compared to the minor characters' treatment of Phoenix
    F. how flight imagery symbolizes Phoenix

8. Read Alice Walker's short story "The Welcome Table." Determine the old woman's quest. Various characters demonstrate differing viewpoints toward the protagonist. Analyze the different perspectives and compare them to the viewpoints of the minor characters in "A Worn Path" toward Phoenix. Walker shows the old woman's death from three different perspectives. After explaining these, hypothesize about how the hunter, the attendant, and the nurse would react if informed of Phoenix's death.
9. After listing attributes that shape Phoenix as a heroic character, write a character sketch about someone you know (or a historical or literary character, fantasy figure, etc.) who shares these qualities.

Evaluation and Enrichment

Informal evaluation of the students' comprehension of "A Worn Path" takes place during postreading discussion. An examination of the response journal and suggested postreading writing activities provide further means of evaluation. Other possibilities include the following:

1. In an essay, discuss the implication of the title as it relates to the theme of the story.
2. Use one of the following statements (from *Reading for Ideas* by Walter Pauk and Josephine Wilson) as a thesis for an essay developed as a result of reading "A Worn Path":
   - A. Every person has a basic dignity.
   - B. Human values are more important than education.
   - C. Human values are more important than race.
   - D. Love transcends death. (84)
3. React in writing to this statement by Joseph Campbell: "The hero is the man of self-achieved submission" (16). Use details from "A Worn Path" to support your assertion. You may agree or disagree with Campbell.
4. Create a dialogue between Phoenix and her grandson as she presents him with the windmill.
5. Compose a poem or short story that contains the monomyth pattern. Be sure to show how your hero is transformed by his trials.
6. Enact a scene in which the minor characters—the hunter, the attendant, the Christmas shopper, and the nurse—share their views about Phoenix. Refer to #5 on the Guide for Reading as a starting point for observations or for scriptwriting.

Related Works

1. *Running Loose* (Chris Crutcher). Young adult novel that deals with coming of age theme and contains seasonal and organic cycles.
2. "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" (Ernest Hemingway). An ideal short story to analyze from a New Critical approach. Compact and tightly crafted, the story yields its theme through a close reading of the imagery of light and darkness.
3. *The Old Man and the Sea* (Ernest Hemingway). An elderly fisherman faces physical and spiritual trials during a sea-going quest.
4. "The Lottery" (Shirley Jackson). This short story contains the scapegoat motif and lends itself well to a discussion of archetypal criticism since it addresses the ritual of sacrifice, atonement and rejuvenation.
5. "Diving into the Wreck" (Adrienne Rich). Contemporary poem that through an extended metaphor compares delving into mythology to a diver searching a submerged wreck. Rich's diver is on a quest, exploring artifacts of the past to discover self.
6. *Oedipus Rex* (Sophocles). In this tragic drama written for a seasonal festival, a hero quest results in spiritual enlightment followed by sacrificial atonement.
7. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain). Perhaps the prototype of the quest theme in American literature. The initiation motif moves the

hero down the river of life toward self-knowledge and awareness of society's injustices.

8. *Our Town* (Thornton Wilder). An examination of the cyclical nature of life. Constructed with a classic line (boy meets girl, falls in love and marries), the play depicts the infinite value of the ordinary.
9. "Leda and the Swan" (William Butler Yeats). A poetic treatment of a famous myth that details the self-sacrifice and submission that occur with union with the gods.
10. The *Star Wars* film series. The quest of Luke Skywalker for a father and for self-knowledge is a familiar and ever-popular journey for students. These films consistently follow the monomyth pattern and contain numerous archetypal figures.

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Guide for Reading

"A Worn Path"

1. Phoenix is characterized by physical description, her actions, and her thoughts. Record at least two statements which exemplify each method of characterization and explain how each contributes to your understanding of the protagonist. For example, what trait or attribute is revealed by these quotations?

   A. "She looked straight ahead."

   B. "'Seem like there is chains about my feet, I get this far.'"

2. Examine the following symbols in "A Worn Path" and suggest a meaning for each:

   A. dark woods
   B. thorn bush
   C. hill
   D. buzzard
   E. scarecrow
   F. bobwhites
   G. hunter
   H. paper windmill

3. "A Worn Path" is replete with figures of speech. List the two things being compared in each of the following statements. Then compose an original simile or metaphor that characterizes Phoenix.

   A. ". . .she kept tapping the frozen earth in front of her. This made a grave and persistent noise. . . like the chirping of a solitary little bird."

B. "Her skin had a pattern. . .as though a whole little tree stood in the middle of her forehead."

C. "The cones dropped as light as feathers."

D. ". . .like a festival figure in some parade, she began to march across."

E. ". . .stretching her fingers like a baby trying to climb the steps."

F. "Big dead trees, like black men with one arm, were standing. . ."

G. ". . .the moss hung as white as lace from every limb."

H. "Overhead the live-oaks met, and it was as dark as a cave."

I. "'Lying on my back like a June bug. . .'"

J. ". . .she gave off perfume like red roses. . ."

K. "'. . .holding his mouth open like a little bird.'"

4. In a journal entry, respond to the following immediately after completing the story:

A. Describe the action of the story.

B. List images that create the mood of the short story.

C. Relate the character, Phoenix, to someone you know.

D. What is the significance of the protagonist's name—Phoenix?

5. Readers may view Phoenix's quest from different perspectives. Similarly, characters in the story perceive her journey from different

points of view. Explain the reactions of these minor characters to Phoenix and suggest what segment of society each might represent:

A. the hunter

B. the attendant

C. the Christmas shopper

D. the nurse

Ethan Frome

Edith Wharton

Adela Aragon Candelaria
Mayfield High School
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Overview

Critical Commentary. Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* is a seemingly simple tale fabricated by an imaginary narrator who gathers information from townspeople, coordinates his story, and arrives at this vision: After studying engineering for a year, Ethan Frome is compelled to return to Starkfield, first to care for his ailing father and senile mother, then to nurse his hypochondriac wife, Zeena. As he earns his meager existence in the frozen barrenness of his farm, which is likened to his loveless marriage, he falls in love with young and orphaned Mattie Silver, his wife's cousin and live-in helper. But when Zeena learns about the deception and arranges for Mattie's dismissal, Ethan and Mattie attempt suicide by sledding down a steep hill and crashing into an old elm tree. Their unsuccessful attempt leaves Ethan deformed and Mattie paralyzed. Zeena turns her attention from her own illness to caring for Ethan and Mattie.

The depth of the story, however, lies not in its plot or its moral but in its brilliant structure, its ironic reversals, its unifying theme of continuous pain, and especially its rich use of imagery and symbolism as an integral part of complex and gripping characterization. A serious study of the novel, then, may require the close reading techniques of the New Critical approach.

The busy engineer who narrates the prologue and the epilogue in the first person clearly asserts that the only truth is in the frame; the nine chapters in-between, told by an omniscient narrator, is his imaginary vision. But the reality reported in the frame is consistently dismal, for the narrator is "pulled up sharp" by this "lame, anguished, bleak...ruin of a man" who drives him to Corbury Junction through a snowstorm. When conditions worsen and Ethan invites him to his home for the night, Ethan presents his vision as he goes back twenty-four years to the events leading up to the tragedy. The New Critic would view this "complicated time scheme" as an effective technique of contrast between Ethan's youthful dreams and his present reality, bridging shockingly in the last chapter the themes of poverty and suffering (McDowell 68).

The New Critic would also delight in the ironical twists of the novel. The dinner that was happily anticipated ends in alarm; Zeena, who couldn't care for herself, becomes Ethan's and Mattie's nursemaid; Mattie, who had given Ethan some hope for living, now becomes his source of grief; Ethan, who had hoped to replace Zeena's face with Mattie's, now finds them hopelessly alike; the suicide attempt that was supposed to end in death results in endless pain; and perhaps most cruelly, Ethan, who hoped to lie by Mattie in the graveyard, now lives a death-in-life existence with her in the farmhouse.

Besides microscopically examining the novel's twists, the New Critics look for consistency in images and symbols, and they will not be disappointed, for symbolic imagery abounds in the novel. Ethan is like the "stark field" and seems "a part of the mute, melancholy landscape, an incarnation of its frozen woe, with all that was warm and sentimental in him bound fast below the surface," and even his "diminished dwelling" is like "the image of his own shrunken body." Zeena's emaciated body and lifeless spirit have soured like the ruined pickle dish which represents her shattered marriage and whose fragments she carries like a "dead body." Mattie is associated with images of spring, her lashes "like netted butterflies," her voice like "a rustling covert leading to enchanted glades." The failure of the suicide attempt is consistent with the theme of defeat.

The archetypal approach would also be appropriate for the teaching of this novel. Since the narrator reveals that his is a tale of "vision," his "once upon a time" version, the story can be read as a fairy tale with Mattie, the lovely orphaned princess turned house slave, yearning to be rescued by the lovesick prince Ethan, while Zeena, the wicked stepmother/witch with the "querulous lines from her thin nose to the corners of her mouth" and the troublesome cat, prevent the escape to Neverland. The numbers presented in the story, such as fifty-two, Ethan's age and the weeks of the year, and twenty-four, the number of years since the accident and the number of hours in the day, represent the wholeness and natural order of Mother Earth, which complements the irony of the theme, for in *Ethan Frome*, there is no order, no release from suffering (Ammons 63).

The novel also invites a Jungian interpretation of infantile regression as opposed to individuation, for Ethan's mother becomes "strange" and dies before his individuation is complete, and so, developing a "dread of being left alone in the farm," he turns to Zeena for fulfillment, expecting to find a Good Mother replacement. But Zeena falls short of his needs, for unlike the Good Mother whose roundness provides nourishment, protection, and warmth, Zeena is "tall, angular, and flat-breasted," the archetypal Terrible Mother who denies his needs (Gimbel 70). Dreaming and longing for another Good Mother, he turns to Mattie, whose "dormant instincts" for mothering he expects to transform so that "her pies and biscuits become the pride of the county." On their night alone, Mattie projects the Good Mother image, lighting the hearth, setting the table, and providing the food which "sets his imagination adrift" to "another world where all was warmth and harmony." But Mattie too has been orphaned before individuation, and so she too is a child who is just playing house. When Zeena discovers that her naughty "children" have destroyed her private property, she drives Mattie out, and Ethan retreats to his study, his playroom of unfulfilled dreams where he toys with a fairy tale vision of a man who leaves his wife to marry another. In the fight scene which follows, he feels "weak and powerless" before this "alien presence," this "evil energy" whom he "abhorred" and who has "mastered him." As he drives Mattie to the station, he detours through Shadow Pond, symbolic of the maternal water of the unconscious, the longing for immersion in the womb (Gimbel 87). And so he and Mattie attempt a return to the ultimate Earth Mother, the tree, the final nourisher (Gimbel 90). When the attempt fails, Zeena regains her position of Mother to her wayward "children," both of whom suffer from permanent regression.

But to approach the novel exclusively from an archetypal perspective would be to narrow one's view of its totality since a Jungian interpretation directly parallels the social perspective, particularly as it applies to a feminist approach. And while it is true that feminists are often in conflict with archetypal approaches to literature which are said to perpetuate the stereotypes of women, Edith Wharton carefully reverses the approach to suit her purpose.

The thesis of *Ethan Frome* from a feminist perspective is that even though women are victims of men who are deceiving in love and weak in character, women manage in their oppressive roles to rise above men (Jessup 16). Despite Ethan's portrayal in a traditional male role of protector and provider who wants "to do for you and care for you. . . and be there when you're sick," and despite his planting the idea of suicide in Mattie's brain ("I'd almost rather have you dead. . ."), he chooses the role of child, electing fantasy over reality, passivity over action, regression over growth—themes associated with the archetypal approach. Ethan's role as a husband parallels his negative role as a man, for he lies to Zeena about the cash advance, entertains thoughts about deserting her despite her ill health, denies her any communication (much like he denied his mother), and worst of all, deceives her in his attraction to Mattie. This negative force of a "man" reduces his women to isolation, sickness, and "premature old age."

For Zeena was not always a witch. She came to the Frome household as caretaker for his mother, but a year after she married Ethan, a man who "never listened. . .never answered her. . .thought of other things while she talked," she too "fell silent." She is guilty only of her "sickliness" and her continuous obsession with it. Perhaps her illness is a plea for attention since the attentions she expects of a husband are denied her, but at least her "troubles" and "complications"—and certainly her letters from "manufacturers of patent medicine"—provide some anticipation and some alleviation from her solitude (Wolfe 82). Despite her progressively worsened condition, she never shouts at or fights with Ethan, allowing "two small tears" to surface only when she sees her marriage shattered. So if Zeena is in fact an archetypal witch or a Terrible Mother, it is only because she has been twisted into one by the life of loneliness and rejection that her husband has imposed upon her. Still, despite her suppression, she regains some energy and enthusiasm when the accident provides her a purpose for living, even if that sole purpose is the dismal need to be needed (Ammons 72).

Ethan's mother, who also was isolated for years on this decaying farm, lived out her life in a "strange insanity." She, like Zeena, "dragged along for years as weak as a baby," never going anywhere or doing anything. Even the wife of the deceased ancestor in the family plot bears the name "Endurance," indicative of the plight of all the Frome women. Ethan varies his pace as he works at the mill or sometimes at odd jobs, but his women know no diversity, existing in solitary confinement in their subservient roles (Ammons 72).

Wharton's answer for this suppressive plight is portrayed in the character of Mattie, in whom Wharton makes a strong appeal for women's economic and emotional independence. For Mattie is portrayed as a feeble, dependent woman with no training and no aspirations, her only talents consisting of making molasses, playing the piano, reciting a poem, and trimming a hat. She has already failed at stenography, bookkeeping, clerical work, and housekeeping (Ammons 70). She attempts to be what Ethan wants her to be, and so when he tells her he can't live without her, she assumes he means death and thereby suggests suicide.

Of course a neo-Aristotelian approach is also perfect for the teaching of this novel since fate cruelly suffocates Ethan's hope for obtaining an engineering degree, an escape from Starkfield, a successful farm, or a compatible wife, and since many elements of a tragedy are represented. And what English teacher could resist the assigning of a reader response vision of the tragedy immediately following the prologue? Still, this guide focuses on the New Critical approach, the archetypal approach, and the feminist approach not only to sensitize students to the unity of the language with the setting, characterization, and theme, but also to demonstrate the universality of archetypes and psychological patterns. Even more important is that the number one vision of most high school students is that of love, dating, and marriage.

Challenges for Adolescent Readers. *Ethan Frome* can be taught with various intensity to almost any high school student. However, because honor or gifted students comprise such a small percentage of the population, this guide is geared toward average students. And while a university setting might lend itself more appropriately to a Freudian interpretation of *Ethan Frome*, it is sufficient for the high school student to analyze *Ethan Frome* from a Jungian perspective.

Suggested Instructional Objectives

After studying *Ethan Frome,* the students will be able to. . .

New Criticism

1. recognize the effectiveness of the frame structure for the unity of the novel
2. trace the irony that deepens the tone and enriches the theme
3. recognize symbolic imagery as an integral part of characterization and theme

Archetypal

4. identify selected archetypes in the novel
5. trace Jung's psychology of infantile regression as it applies to the novel

Feminist

6. examine how traditional sex roles affect the lives of the characters in the novel
7. analyze the conflict of responsibilities in Ethan's marriage
8. examine Ethan's motivations for marriage
9. examine Ethan's and Mattie's motivations for suicide

Prereading Activities

1. Read Edgar Lee Masters' poem "Silence" and elicit discussion on the profound dimensions of silence, helping students realize that when the

moment is too great, the experience too deep, words are useless. Call students' attention to the third line and ask what might be left unsaid between a "man and a maid." Tell them that the novel they are about to read is also about silence, but instead of encountering profound experiences, the characters are frozen in the silence of their isolation. Have them note the profound silence between the "man and the maid" in *Ethan Frome*.

2. Ask students to sit silently for five minutes with no talking, no doodling, no movement. Ask them to reveal their feelings of boredom and their patterns of thought. Lead the discussion toward times in their lives when they felt alone and ask them to imagine such existence with no stereo, no radio, no television, no phone, no books, no people. Tell them that the story they are going to read is about people whose monotonous lives drive them into themselves and their thoughts so that they often live in a fantasy world. Perhaps listing such fantasies from the novel could be assigned in a reading guide.

3. The teacher should review the term symbolism with students by eliciting a listing of objects that might be symbolic (e.g., the school mascot, the Republican elephant, the wedding band, the wheelchair, and the flag). Reference might be made to *The Scarlet Letter* and to Dimmesdale's constant placing of his hand to his heart, symbolic of his

hidden guilt, or to the scarlet letter itself. Direct attention to symbols of the seasons, suggesting, for example, that fading leaves and withered flowers are symbolic of old age. Initiate a discussion of winter and list the conditions that a frozen, snowy landscape might suggest.

4. Define irony for the students and elicit examples of verbal irony: "What a hunk!" when he's a wimp; "What a palace!" when it's a dump; "What a prize!" when it s a token. Elicit examples from literature to illustrate irony of fate. For example, in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, Kino wants the pearl to save Coyotito's life, but the pearl is the cause of the boy's death; or in Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat," the man who is the most deserving of living is the only one who drowns. Give personal examples of twists in your life and elicit examples of twists in theirs. Have them keep written lists of reversals as they occur in the novel.

5. Review first person and third person omniscient points of view and lead discussion of the advantages and limitations of each. Cite examples from familiar works such as *Tom Sawyer*, told by an omniscient narrator, and *Huckleberry Finn*, told from Huck's view, and discuss how the stories might have differed had they been told from a different point of view. Tell the students that they are about to read a novel whose point of view changes, and ask them to be aware of this change and its consequences.

6. To introduce students to archetypes, show the Children's Faerie Tale Theater version of "Snow White" (available at most video centers), or perhaps simply discuss the similarities among familiar fairy tales such as "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty." The advantage of the former approach, however, is that students will acknowledge the entertainment value of basic story lines that never grow old. After acknowledging common ground in these tales, such as the fairy tale princess in conflict, the wicked witch as obstacle, and the handsome prince as rescuer, ask students to look for the adult version of the fairy tale in *Ethan Frome*.

7. To introduce students to the archetypal woman, ask them to suggest images associated with Mother Nature and list their responses on the board, emphasizing such words as *fertility, vegetation,* and *nourisher*. Ask students to share experiences from their lives in which only their mothers could kiss the hurt, prepare the food, embrace the fear, or provide the warmth, and then have them relate specific incidents when they were separated from and longed for their mothers. Finally, ask them to recall times when their mothers angered them or hurt them to such a degree that they came to think of her as a wicked woman or ugly witch, and proceed cautiously with discussion. Perhaps this could be handled more appropriately with a private journal entry. Students who have no mother might describe the kind of mother they wish they

had or hope their children will have. Conclude with a lecture on Jung's Good Mother and Terrible Mother, and explain his psychology of regression and individuation, asking students to jot notes and page numbers of instances when Ethan acts like a child and Zeena a mother.

8. Have students read James Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and discuss Mitty's fantasies. Then ask them to write a journal entry on the kinds of things they fantasize about, sharing with them your personal examples first, of course!

9. Show students the popular poster with the caption "Not All Drunken Drivers Die; Some Live to Tell About It" which depicts a mutilated body with a powerfully oppressive face. Elicit discussion on why people commit suicide and have students write a paper or a journal response on mental health and suicide prevention.

10. Have each student interview at least three married people, asking the following questions:
    A. Specifically, what one thing do you like about your marriage?
    B. Specifically, what one thing do you least like about your marriage?
    C. Why did you marry?

    Discourage students from accepting the obvious "I was in love" for the latter question, but rather encourage them to probe for a definition of love. Compile results and share responses with the class, stimulating a discussion on motivations for marriage, expectations of marriage, and the difference between the dream and the reality. Have students write a journal entry beginning with "The person I marry will . . . ." Finally, ask students to note Ethan's motivations for marriage as they read the novel.

11. Have students bring in traditional wedding vows, and after reading the variations and writing the diverse promises on the board, consult a dictionary for the meaning of the word *vow* and discuss why people often make pledges they have no intentions of keeping. Then play a love triangle song, especially one about lying and deception in marriage, and ask them as they listen to note the lyrics that describe intense emotions and ultimate results. Gear the discussion toward responsibilities in marriage and what is expected of them as a marriage partner. Finally, ask them to write a journal entry on one of the following topics and share responses with the class:

    A. Marriage vows I would consider honoring

    B. When I marry the responsibilities of my partner will be. . .

    C. I would consider divorce if . . .

12. Divide the class into groups of five or six and have students brainstorm sex-role questions similar but not limited to these examples:

A. Should women work outside the home?

B. When should men do housework?

C. Is it more important for males or for females to prepare for a career after high school?

D. Is chivalry alive today? Should it be?

Their ultimate goal is to take an informal poll of five people each, both from the school and from the community, and answer in detail the following questions:

A. What is the female role in America today?

B. What is the male role in America today?

Have each group report on its findings and compile the information for display or reproduction. Then, as they read the novel, ask them to compare their findings to the roles played by Wharton's characters.

Guide for Reading

The Guide for Reading is designed to make students aware of the integral relationship between setting and character. With some variation, such guides could be designed for Prereading Activities #1-#5. An alternative approach to promote a consciousness of the relationship between close reading and an appreciation of language is to encourage students to buy their own books and underline the symbolism in one color, ironic twists in another, etc., or perhaps simply to label and take notes along the margins as the work is discussed in class. Still another variation is for students to keep note cards with the various headings, citing excerpts and page numbers for future reference.

Postreading and Enrichment Activities

Questions to guide reading and discussion are provided in the Appendix. In addition, the teacher may offer any of these activity options to students:

1. With a partner, write a dialogue between Ethan and Mattie, Ethan and Zeena, Mattie and Zeena, or among all three of them after the accident, being consistent with Edith Wharton's language. Roleplay the dialogue for the class, wearing appropriate dress, colors, and hair styles. Then change the setting to a scene from the book twenty-four years earlier, but instead of portraying withdrawn and inarticulate characters, have them express openly and honestly their true feelings about themselves and each other. The purpose of this second roleplaying activity is to demonstrate how these characters could have avoided the "infernal triangle" and altered their fate if they had experienced open communication and active involvement in life.
2. Write an obituary for Mrs. Frome (Ethan's mother), specifying the cause of her death, her family survivors, and her life's accomplishments.

3. Using a frame structure similar to Edith Wharton's, create a short story making your imagery consistent with your characterization and using as many literary techniques as you can incorporate to unify your theme.

4. You are Edith Wharton writing *Ethan Frome*, and you have just written the Ethan-Zeena quarrel scene. Finish the book, changing the plot line and using consistent language.

5. Create a collage that depicts the isolation and the barrenness of Starkfield, focusing on the imagery and the mood of the novel.

6. Use the recording activities suggested in the Guide for Reading to develop a major paper for topics 1, 2, or 3 under Evaluation.

7. Create a short story (not necessarily a tragedy) using the fairy tale archetype as your skeletal model. Although you may have variations in your approach, be sure to include a fairy princess in conflict, a wicked witch as obstacle, and a handsome prince as rescuer.

8. Rewrite *Ethan Frome* as a fairy tale for children, but instead of looking for effect as Wharton did, attach a moral at the end. Then create a cover for your paperback edition, with an artistic production on the front cover and an enticement for the reader to buy your book on the back cover.

9. Write an essay with a thesis that suggests that many plots are created from a basic fairy tale model. Begin with a skeletal outline of a movie

or book reduced to its lowest common plot of fairy tale origin. Then progress to analyze the depth of the work and its thematic implications.

10. Your listings of page numbers and notations of Ethan's infantile regression and Zeena's dictatorial mothering should now be complete. Final thoughts and implications interpreting the novel from an archetypal perspective should be entertained in a journal entry, or you may prefer to use this information to develop a major paper for topics 4 or 5 under Evaluation.

11. Write an article to appear in the *Bettsbridge Eagle* the day following the tragedy and report the event, citing possible motivations for the attempt. You may assume the role of either a male or a female reporter, and you may slant the news any way you wish.

12. You are Zeena (or Mattie or Ethan). Write a poem or a song in which you lament your condition. You may either perform in front of the class or tape your finale and then share with your peers.

13. Write a letter to Edith Wharton expressing your view of the novel and your position on feminism. Suggest how she could have changed the novel if indeed you thought she should, or why you think it is effective as it is.

14. You are engaged to be married and have presented your beloved with a wonderful assortment of books, one of which is *Ethan Frome*. Write a

letter to your intended telling him/her why you plan to marry and what you expect your marriage will be like, yet expressing some concerns about recurring doubts that your marriage, like the Fromes', will end in a triangle. Pose "what if" questions alluding to Ethan's, Zeena's, and Mattie's plights.

15. You are Zeena, who has just arrived from Bettsbridge, and you are happily absorbed in your misery until you discover the broken dish, convincing you that your marriage is shattered. Write a journal entry describing your feelings about Ethan in particular and men in general. (A journal entry recording Zeena's thoughts and feelings can be assigned at various points in the novel.)

16. You are Mattie the night before you are to leave the Frome household. Write a journal entry describing your feelings toward Ethan and Zeena. Then explain how you could have avoided the pain of dependency. (Mattie's views at other strategic parts of the novel would also make appropriate journal entries.)

17. You are Ethan after the tragedy, and for twenty-four years you have put up with two nagging women. Express your feelings about them, citing specific instances of their verbal attacks toward each other and toward you.

18. As a follow-up to Prereading Activity #11, consider today's alarming divorce statistics and discuss the differences between marriages today and marriages at the time the novel was written, noting that while society offers new alternatives to marital challenges, wedding vows remain the same. Specify the choices Wharton's characters would have in a modern setting. Then record in a journal entry whether personal fulfillment when attracted to someone more exciting than a current spouse should take precedence over honoring marriage vows.

19. Take the results of the sex-role survey from Prereading #12 and relate those results to Wharton's portrayals of Ethan, Zeena, and Mattie. Decide how their lives could have been strengthened or changed had their sex roles been defined differently.

20. Prepare an original artwork (pencil, charcoal, oil, watercolor, sandpainting, etc.) illustrating one of the following:

    A. Setting and mood in *Ethan Frome*
    B. Zeena as Good Mother or as Terrible Mother or both
    C. Mattie before the accident or twenty-four years later or both
    D. The trio sitting around the kitchen
    E. Scene of your choice depicting an important facet of the novel

Evaluation

Because students who may not have the writing skills necessary to score well on a composition should nevertheless be rewarded for their close reading and understanding of a literary work, an objective examination along with one or more of the following writing assignments is an essential means of evaluation.

1. In a well substantiated essay, explain how Edith Wharton uses language to unify the theme in *Ethan Frome*, considering carefully the literary devices she employs.
2. In a well constructed essay, discuss how Edith Wharton uses structure, including point of view, foreshadowing, and flashbacks, as an effective means of contrast and unity. Be sure you support your assertions with specific, illustrative examples.
3. *Ethan Frome* abounds with irony. In a carefully structured essay, trace the development of the story as the ironical twists occur.
4. In a well organized essay, discuss the novel as an adult fairy tale in which the prince and fair maiden return from the sunset to live with the witch.
5. Write a critical essay in which you discuss the novel from an archetypal perspective, demonstrating how Ethan portrays the overgrown child in regression, Zeena the Good Mother turned Terrible, and Mattie the Good Mother substitute.

6. Decide whether males or females are portrayed more favorably in the novel, and write a well substantiated essay defending your position.

7. In a carefully constructed essay, discuss the motivations of the three major characters for love and marriage, citing examples from the novel to support your assertions.

8. Write an essay discussing the major events that lead to the suicide attempt and asserting whether such an attempt is justified.

9. In a well supported essay, discuss how Ethan and Zeena fail to meet the responsibilities of their marriage, and suggest what each could have done to avoid the pain.

Related Works

1. *Pride and Prejudice* (Jane Austen). This classic novel about courtship and love not only reveals motivations for marriage but also provides models, like the Bennets' weak marriage and the Gardiners' strong marriage.

2. *Wuthering Heights* (Emily Bronte). Wharton was influenced by the structure of this novel, by the Catherine-Heathcliff infidelity, and by the Cathy-Linton disastrous marriage.

3. *Ethan Frome, A Dramatization* (Owen Davis and Donald Davis). This dramatic version of the novel was staged by Guthrie McCentic at the National Theater in New York City in 1936.

4. *A Tale of Two Cities* (Charles Dickens). This nineteenth century classic contains various archetypes, including the Great Mother figure of Lucie and the Terrible Mother, Madame Defarge.

5. *Medea* (Euripides). This classical tragedy depicts the triangle of Medea, Jason, and Glauce, and develops the Good Mother and Terrible Mother archetypes.

6. "The Heyday of the Blood" (Dorothy Canfield Fisher). This frequently anthologized story-within-a-story contrasts sharply with *Ethan Frome,* demonstrating how Gran'ther Pendleton refuses to "half die" although "he has been ailing all his life."

7. *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald). This novel reveals the devastating effects of lives that are ruined by love triangles.

8. *Blithedale Romance* (Nathaniel Hawthorne). This book portrays Coverdale and Hollingworth both looking to love young Priscilla rather than her older sister Zenobia, the character whose name Wharton adapted.

9. "Ethan Brand" (Nathaniel Hawthorne). This tale deals with the deadening of the spirit through the sin of isolation from mankind, and its protagonist is the other Ethan in American literature.

10. *Edith Wharton, A Biography* (R. W. B. Lewis). Lewis provides pictures of Wharton, presents an overview of her fiction, and analyzes the relationship between her life and *Ethan Frome*.

11. "Resume" (Dorothy Parker). In this cynical short poem, Dorothy Parker dismisses various forms of suicide and satirically advocates living.

12. *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare). Not only does this play contain conflicts in love and motivations for suicide, but much of the imagery is related to disease and decay.

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Guide for Reading

Ethan Frome

The prologue of *Ethan Frome* sets the tone of the book and depicts the patterns of imagery and symbolism that continue throughout the novel. As you read the prologue, quote as many descriptive phrases as you can find under the appropriate headings. A few examples are listed to get you started. Use the back of this paper or additional paper if you need more space.

Winter Setting

"thick snow"

"sunless cold"

Frome Farm

"orchard of starved apple trees"

"'bout as bare's a milkpan when the cat's been around"

Ethan

"he was but the ruin of a man"

"looks as if he's dead and in hell now"

Silence

"silent nod to postmaster"

"his taciturnity was respected"

Now that you have images to work with, use a separate sheet of paper to write a paragraph describing how Edith Wharton combines setting and characterization as an integral part of her novel. You may use the following topic sentence, or you may prefer to compose your own: Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome is likened to the Starkfield in which Ethan lives.

Appendix

The teacher may select from among the following topics for discussion as the novel is read:

Prologue

1. Compare and discuss examples of imagery and symbolism which students have listed on their copies of the Guide for Reading.
2. What metaphors are used to describe the winter attacks in Starkfield?
3. What is the symbolic representation of the missing "L" from the Frome household?
4. Consider Ethan's age and the time since the accident, and determine if these numbers have special significance.
5. What masculine characteristics does Ethan Frome depict?
6. It is understandable that Harmon Gow "permitted" himself to reveal little information regarding the Frome tragedy, for men seldom gossip, but the stereotypical woman relishes gossip. (A) Is this a fair assessment of traditional sex roles? (B) Why do you suppose Mrs. Hale is "unexpectedly reticent" on the subject?
7. According to Ethan, why does his mother progressively worsen and die?
8. What does the reader know about the narrator and his job? Could the narrator be female?

Chapter 1

1. After reading Chapter 1 and each subsequent chapter, discuss your increasing awareness of the significance of the language in the categories listed on the Guide for Reading.
2. Discuss the possible reasons for the change from the first person narrator to the omniscient point of view after the prologue.
3. Describe the effectiveness of the flashback as Ethan looks for Mattie through the church window, and discuss what is revealed.
4. What is the symbolic significance of Mattie's "cherry-coloured scarf"?
5. What is significant about the circular motions of the Virginia Reel?
6. Discuss Ethan's motivation for helping Mattie with the household chores. Then discuss Mattie's reasons for avoiding them and suggest alternative occupations for her.
7. How is Edith Wharton reversing stereotype sex roles by revealing Ethan's attention to shaving?
8. Ethan and Mattie are both depicted as sensitive "to the appeal of natural beauty." What is Ethan's primary motivation in showing Mattie the wonders of nature? What do you thus learn about his vanity?

Chapter 2

1. What is said about the elm as a foreshadowing device?

2. How is Ethan's childlike insecurity with both Mattie and Zeena revealed in this chapter?
3. How is Zeena's description parallel to the Bad Mother archetype?
4. What is significant about Ethan's dreams?
5. Describe the scene at the graveyard and the implication of Ethan's aspiration for Mattie to "some day . . . lie there beside me."
6. How are Denis Eady and Ethan both made to look silly by their bragging?
7. What do Ethan's "wild thoughts" about tramps tell us about his secret longings for the disposal of women he no longer wants?
8. Why does Ethan pretend "he has mill accounts to go over"?

Chapter 3

1. Locate the numerous references to silence and discuss their effect on the tone of the novel.
2. How does Ethan behave like a child when he breathes a sigh of relief upon learning that Zeena is going into Bettsbridge?
3. Describe the circumstances that brought Mattie to Starkfield and the lack of skills that causes her to remain.
4. How does Zeena demonstrate independence in her medical trips and subsequent spending?

5. What do Ethan's lying to his wife and his failure to drive Zeena to the station say about Ethan's character?

Chapter 4

1. How is the word "Endurance" on the Frome gravestone symbolic of the Frome women?
2. Contrast the language between the threshold scene with Mattie and the threshold scene with Zeena in Chapter 2.
3. What do the colors of the "crimson ribbon" and the "gay red glass dish" symbolize?
4. Discuss the warm and cold imagery associated with Mattie and Zeena respectively.
5. Why would obeying Zeena's orders restore Ethan's "shaken balance" when his mother was ill?
6. How is the broken dish scene similar to the infantile behavior of two children playing house?
7. Who was the backbone in the Frome household during Mrs. Frome's illness and death? What circumstances led to Zeena's and Ethan's marriage?
8. How valid was Zeena's excuse to stay in Starkfield because she feared a "loss of identity" in the city?
9. How Might Zeena's silence be attributed to Ethan's treatment of her?

10. How does Ethan's pride at the Hales' conflict with his nonassertive behavior?

11. What is Ethan's immature response to the Ned and Ruth kissing scene?

Chapter 5

1. What are the implications of the "irresponsible night" and "warm lamp-lit room" and Ethan's liberties of caress in the former but caution in the latter?
2. This chapter reveals a second foreshadowing of the dangerous elm tree. What might the big elm represent?
3. Ethan kisses Mattie's sewing "stuff" rather than Mattie. How does this cast him in an infantile role of make-believer?
4. How does Ethan pride himself with authoritative words in planning their coasting?

Chapter 6

1. What is the significance of the change from sleet to rain?
2. How does Ethan compare to a child in his unexplained happiness with fantasies?
3. What does Ethan's plan to deceive Zeena with the pasted dish reveal about his integrity as a husband?

Chapter 7

1. What similes are used to reveal the scene when Zeena explains her need for money?
2. What is the significance of the broken pickle dish, and why do you think Zeena carries it like a "dead body"?
3. What powerfully negative phrases depict Zeena as a Bad Mother?
4. Why might "complications" be an exciting prognosis for Zeena?
5. How does Ethan fail to meet his wife's need for sympathy after her prognosis in Bettsbridge?
6. What do Ethan's intense feelings of abhorrence toward Zeena and his passionate kissing scene with Mattie reveal about his values concerning marriage?
7. Edith Wharton says that this was the "first scene of open anger between the couple in their sad seven years together." What does this reveal about the marriage and their attitudes toward each other?
8. As an honorable husband, does Ethan have a right to keep Mattie, as he demands?

Chapter 8

1. What does Ethan's flinging of Zeena's needlework symbolize?
2. Describe the springlike images that Ethan associates with Mattie on his way to town and decide what the season suggests.
3. How does Ethan's fairytale daydream parallel his circumstances?

4. How do Ethan's plans for running away affirm his regressive pattern?
5. What does Mrs. Hale's kindness to Ethan reveal about Ethan the child?
6. How do you account for Ethan's values when he plots to deceive and desert Zeena while being scrupulous in his treatment of the Hales?
7. How does Ethan justify his plan to leave Zeena?
8. How is Ethan's "manhood" humbled?

Chapter 9

1. Compare Zeena's hair to Mattie's and discuss the significance of each.
2. Discuss the images that make Shadow Pond beautiful to lovers.
3. What significance might be attached to Ethan's finding Mattie's locket?
4. What purpose is served by Ethan and Mattie's stopping at Shadow Pond to reminisce?
5. Locate and discuss imagery that sets the mood for tragedy.
6. Why does Zeena's face interfere with Ethan's steering?
7. What is the archetypal significance of Mattie's breaking the circle on that spring day to join Ethan?
8. What does their clinging together "like children" suggest about the Bad Mother archetype?
9. What is suggested by Ethan's wanting to die being cuddled?
10. What is the significance of returning to the elm?

11. Compare the differences between Ethan's treatment of Zeena and of Mattie.
12. Ethan tells Mattie he'd rather be dead with her than stay married to Zeena. What does this tell you about the kind of man he is?
13. Why does Ethan speak with "authority in his voice" with "fits of boastfulness"?
14. Does it break with traditional sex role stereotypes that Mattie is the aggressor in the kissing scene?
15. What motivates them to commit suicide, and who suggests it?
16. Is Ethan justified in steering the sled into the tree? Explain.

Epilogue

1. For what purpose does the point of view shift back to the original?
2. Mrs. Hale compares the Fromes "up at the farm and the Fromes down in the graveyard." How does this ending unify the theme?
3. Compare the language describing the two women, and discuss what is ironical about Mattie's "witchlike qualities."
4. Whose "querulous drone" is heard as the narrator enters? What does it reveal about the change that has occurred?
5. What positive qualities does Zeena demonstrate after the accident?
6. What motivates Zeena to care for the couple when before "she couldn't even care for herself"?

7. How is Ethan's attitude toward the women consistent with his values of twenty-four years ago? Does he grow positively or negatively in his role?

Whole Book

1. Contrast the color imagery and the seasons associated with Mattie to those associated with Zeena.
2. How are light and dark images used to enhance the mood of the novel (e.g., in the first two pages of Chapter 7 and again in Chapter 9)?
3. Compare Ethan's and Zeena's initial conflicting attitudes about allowing Mattie into their home and their subsequent ironical reversal.
4. Discuss how the three major characters use illusions to escape their plight of loneliness and isolation.
5. Now that he has two women to contend with rather than one, do you believe that, given the opportunity, Ethan would look for love again?
6. If Ethan had truly loved Mattie, would he not have encouraged her courtship and marriage to Denis Eady, son of the successful Irish grocer? How is Zeena superior in her aspirations for Mattie's "amusements" and "opportunities"?
7. Discuss who rules in the Frome household and decide if that is as it should be.

8. How do the roles of Harmon Gow, Mrs. Ned Hale, and Denis Eady affect the story?

9. The bulk of the novel focuses on Ethan's thoughts rather than Zeena's. Discuss how the novel would be different if the reader had been allowed access to Zeena's thoughts.

10. Does Zeena enjoy taking care of Ethan and Mattie? How do you suppose Zeena would have changed if Ethan had died and Mattie had lived, or if they had both died?

11. How does the successful engineer narrating the story parallel Ethan Frome the failure?

12. Explain what Ethan's expectations of life and of Zeena were. How did he and Zeena fail to make these dreams come true?

A Teacher's Reading List

W. David LeNoir
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The texts listed below are resources for educators who wish to examine further the theories and pedagogy associated with the critical approaches utilized by the authors of the guides in this book. These texts were selected for their accessibility and for their value to educators who have had little formal preparation in literary criticism. Most of them cite fairly extensive references for readers who wish to pursue their study or satisfy their curiosity—or both.

Beach, Richard, and James Marshall. *Teaching Literature in the Secondary School.* San Diego: Harcourt, 1991.

Designed as a textbook for students in English education, this book addresses both theoretical and pedagogical considerations of responses to literature. One chapter of particular interest to reader response advocates is "Evaluating Students' Responses" (207-26), which offers concrete strategies for evaluating and assessing students' oral and written responses to literary texts.

Bleich, David. *Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1988.

Bleich presents a four-part course of study for developing students' affective responses to literature. Beginning with an examination of feelings and their nature, the sequence works its way outward through feelings in response to literature and considerations of literary importance to a more global involvement with the responses of others. Bleich relies heavily on actual classroom responses to demonstrate the connections between the theoretical and the practical.

Booth, Wayne C. "How Not to Use Aristotle: The *Poetics.*" *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970. 103-15.

In this essay and in its companion piece in the same volume, "How to Use Aristotle" (117-29), Booth presents a very readable commentary on the ways in which Aristotelian views of literature are used and abused. These could serve as an excellent prelude to reading or rereading Aristotle's *Poetics.*

Brooks, Cleanth, and Robert Penn Warren. *Understanding Fiction.* 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979.

Long used as a college literature textbook, this classic New Critical text contains literary works followed by interpretations and questions. Its most useful feature for

students of critical theory is the series of introductory passages which precede the book's sections.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* Bollingen Series 17. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.

While not, strictly speaking, a work about criticism, this text offers a detailed and direct examination of the archetypal motifs of the quest and the hero. Campbell distills the universal elements of these motifs from various mythologies and religions and discusses them in terms that allow readers to recognize correlates in literary works.

Caws, Peter. "What Is Structuralism?" *Partisan Review* 35 (1968): 75-91.

Caws presents an overview of the three prominent cultural aspects of the structuralist movement and their "civilized" counterparts—magic/science, myth/literature, and totemism/morality—all of which structuralists see as forming meaning through a common structure, language. He also provides an excellent synthesis of the historical and philosophical bases of structuralist theory.

Corcoran, Bill, and Emrys Evans, eds. *Readers, Texts, Teachers.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987.

The essays in this volume offer a wide range of considerations involving the reader response approach. Special attention is given to reading theory, drama, and connections between literature and composition. "Teachers Creating Readers" (41-74) offers a particularly insightful look at connecting theory and application.

Davis, Robert Con, ed. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. New York: Longman, 1986.

This collection of essays offers an excellent overview of the critical schools. The contributing writers are among the most prominent in their areas. Of particular interest to the pluralist are Elaine Showalter's "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (167-81), Claude Levi-Strauss's "The Structural Study of Myth" (307-22), and Stanley Fish's "Interpreting the *Variorum*" (392-408).

Fetterley, Judith. *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Reading*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1978.

This work presents a feminist approach to interpreting specific texts, many of which are commonly used at the secondary level (e.g., "Rip Van Winkle," "The Birthmark," and *The Great Gatsby*). Fetterley's compelling interpretations should be considered basic reading for the eclectic teacher of literature.

Flood, James, and Diane Lapp. "A Reader Response Approach to the Teaching of Literature (Research and Practice)." *Reading Research and Instruction* 27.4 (Summer 1988): 61-66.

This short article is a good starting point for educators interested in investigating the reader response approach. It offers glimpses of the ideology, theory, research, and implementation of response-centered instruction. The list of references cited is particularly valuable.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1957.

Generally considered the foremost archetypal critic, Frye explains the systematics and methodology of the literary depiction of archetypes. He advocates the consideration of literature as reflection of the pervasive motif embodied by the cyclic nature of the seasons.

Guerin, Wilfred L., et al. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper, 1979.

Probably the best single-text introduction to the scope and diversity of critical approaches, this book offers readable explanations of the critical schools and employs each school's criteria in interpreting the same texts—Marvell's "To His Coy

Mistress," Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," and Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Nelms, Ben F., ed. *Literature in the Classroom: Readers, Texts, and Contexts*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1988.

The special value of this collection of essays is that it begins with an examination of reading theory, progresses through a consideration of the reader response approach, and ends by describing the methodology of various critical schools. The essayists emphasize practical application and consider specific texts taught at various grade levels.

Nelson, Cary, ed. *Theory in the Classroom*. Urbana, IL: U of Illinois P, 1986.

Many of the essays in this volume explore "middle ground" between two critical approaches—"Teaching in Your Sleep: Feminism and Psychoanalysis" (129-48), for example. The pluralistic considerations involved in "Teaching the Popular" (177-200), which considers the pedagogical value of popular culture (specifically rock and roll music), have important implications for considering students' responses to popular literature.

Probst, Robert E. "Dialogue with a Text." *English Journal* 77.1 (1988): 32-38.

Probst succinctly explains the need for and the process of implementing a reader response approach to literature. He explains how the students' responses can be used in conjunction with—not in place of—a more formal analysis. Probst's ideas are developed further in his *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior High School* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1988).

Purves, Alan C., Theresa Rogers, and Anna O. Soter. *How Porcupines Make Love II: Teaching a Response-Centered Literature Curriculum*. New York: Longman, 1990.

This text offers a refreshing, non-traditional format mixing expository prose and less formal modes—just as its first edition did. Its scope is not limited to the reader response approach to literature that it advocates; it also relates various topics, such as writing, oral interpretation, and computer use, to literature study.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. *Literature as Exploration*. 4th ed. New York: MLA, 1983.

Rosenblatt's seminal work in reader response theory, this book offers compelling arguments for the employment of a response-based approach to literature and describes the fundamental structure for the process itself. Another work by Rosenblatt of interest to reader response advocates is *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1978).

Skura, Meredith Ann. *The Literary Use of the Psychoanalytic Process.* New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1981.

Skura offers an excellent examination of the application of psychoanalytic theory in the study of literature. Of particular interest are the first chapter, which is primarily a theoretical overview, and the second chapter, which is a more functional consideration of application.

Thorpe, James, ed. *Relations of Literature Study.* New York: MLA, 1967.

The seven essays that comprise this text examine the relationships between literature and different aspects of human society—history, myth, biography, psychology, sociology, religion, and music. All seven essays cite numerous additional references, but the essays "Literature and Myth" and "Literature and Sociology" are particularly helpful in this respect because their reference lists are both extensive and thematically categorized.